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# BIOGRAPHY

OF

REV. JACOB SMITH KESSLER,

OF THE

Church of the United Brethren in Christ,

COMPILED FROM HIS

AUTOBIOGRAPHY,

BY REV. I. L. KEPHART,

WITH A SERMON BY THE COMPILER.

PUBLISHED BY THE PUBLISHING COMMITTEE OF THE EAST  
PENNSYLVANIA CONFERENCE, OF THE CHURCH  
OF THE UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST.

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*To the Publishing Committee of the East Pennsylvania Conference:*

DEAR BRETHREN:—

A perusal of the accompanying manuscripts will give you a knowledge of the manner in which I have accomplished the work you committed to my hands. None can be more fully aware of the fact that it is but *imperfectly* done, than am I. That it would have been dispatched with much more ability and completeness, had it been committed to other hands, I feel very well assured; nor am I willing to admit that it is as well done as it might have been, *even by myself*, under more favorable circumstances.

The cumbering cares that ever hang around the mind of the pastor, enveloping and burdening his mental powers like a gloomy cloud, together with the many interruptions to which he is always exposed—called upon at all hours, either to entertain a friend, visit the sick, or officiate at funerals, &c., &c.,—must, to a very great extent, disqualify him for the efficient discharge of duties of a literary character.

Conscious, however, of the fact that, *under the circumstances*, I have done the best I could, and hoping that your expectations are, *in part*, realized, I commit the manuscripts to you, for whatever disposition you may deem best calculated to do justice to the dead, and further the interests of our holy religion.

Very respectfully,

Your brother in Christ,

I. L. KEPHART.

HUMMELSTOWN, Pa., February, 1867.

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## P R E F A C E .

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In presenting this biography to the public, the object is twofold:

1. A desire to do justice to one who lived, labored and died among us, by giving an unvarnished history of the unselfish, pious, devoted life and efficient labors of a plain, unassuming, humble minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. A hope that by the perusal of its pages others may be stimulated to perseverance and self-denial in the discharge of the duties of the ministry, and the cause of vital godliness, evangelical conversion, and the new birth be strengthened

That Mr. Kessler was truly a spiritual man, and that the love of God in his soul prompted him to a life of holy zeal and strict self-denial, all must feel well assured who peruse these pages. That his labors were very efficient, and he a very successful minister of the gospel, the reader will feel well assured; the more especially, when he remembers the disadvantages under which he set out, and the many obstacles and incumbrances with which he had to contend and with which he was so frequently harrassed, during the whole of his ministerial life. Nor will it be denied that the United Brethren Church, which he served so long and so faithfully, and on which he reflected so great honor, by his very exemplary life and efficient labors, and by which he was so poorly compensated, owes him a lasting debt of gratitude. It will be seen that he spent twenty-six years in the active ministry, in which time he traversed and re-traversed nearly the whole of eastern Pennsylvania—after pushing his way into new districts, where the United Brethren Church was unknown—nor did he, in many instances, abandon such places, until he had succeeded in permanently establishing the Church there. To him and others, who were, in spirit and labors, the same as he, the Church is indebted for the great progress it has made in eastern Pennsylvania

since the year eighteen hundred and thirty. And who that intelligently compares the strength and efficiency of the United Brethren Church in this section, at the time Mr. Kessler first received license to preach, with its present strength and efficiency, but becomes deeply sensible of the great progress she has made since that day. And what minister or member of the church, conscious of this rapid advance of the church of his choice, but feels thankful to God and takes courage, despite the whinings of a few croakers, who are ever longing after "*the good old times!*" Thanks be to God, the United Brethren Church does move, and *moves in the right direction*—in the direction of vital godliness, stripped of fanaticism, and seasoned with intelligence and charity.

Without claiming for it any merits of a literary character, this little volume is committed to the reading public in general, and to the ministers and members of the United Brethren Church in particular, with the hope that its defects may be viewed with the eye of charity, and its pages perused with interest and profit. While there doubtless are in the work many things at which some may cavil—some defects sufficiently glaring to horrify the critic—and while it may be wholly incapable of interesting the fastidious novelist or silly romancer, yet we feel well assured that the sober, intelligent reader, while he may discover defects in the composition, will not fail to admire Mr. Kessler's unselfish zeal, approve his devoted piety, and be moved with a sincere desire to die the same tranquil, triumphant death.

With the sincere desire that it may contribute something to the cause of vital godliness, this biography is submitted to the reading public in general, and the lay and clerical members of the United Brethren Church in particular.

I. L. K.

HUMMELSTOWN, PA., February, 1867.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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A word respecting the circumstances that gave rise to this biography, and the manner in which it has been brought forth, is deemed necessary, by way of introduction. By perusing the volume it will be seen that many of the later years of Mr. Kessler's ministerial life were spent on stations, instead of circuits. Although his labors and duties, as a stationed pastor, were arduous, yet he found himself, almost every day, in possession of a few leisure moments. Being, as he truly was, possessed of a very industrious, energetic nature, he soon became anxious for some exercise to which he might profitably devote those moments. After meditating upon various projects, he finally determined to devote them to the work of writing out a history of his life. He commenced the work, and continued it from time to time, as opportunity afforded, until the last year that he labored in Lancaster City, when he ceased writing, having brought the history of his life down to that year. These manuscripts he deposited in his library, where they remained until after his death. They

were then, at the request of some members of Conference, who became conscious of their existence, placed into the hands of the East Pennsylvania Conference, by his widow. The conference placed them in the hands of a select committee, whose duty it was to carefully examine them; and if they considered them possessed of sufficient merit to justify their publication in book form, they were to have them published. This committee, consisting of Revs. E. Light, L. W. Craumer, G. W. Miles Rigor, W. S. H. Keys and Jacob Doerkson, having examined them, came to the conclusion that the facts narrated in them were of sufficient interest to justify their publication. But, as Mr. Kessler was no scholar, he had worded all in the most common style of language, and they felt that to make an interesting and readable book of them, it was necessary that they be re-written. In looking for a suitable person to whom to commit the task of re-writing, they—unfortunately for the book—hit upon the subscriber. The manuscripts were brought to him by Rev. L. W. Craumer, who, in a very few words, made known the wish of the committee. Nothing but a desire to *do duty*, to comply with the wish of the committee, and to serve the Church and



the world, could have induced us to consent even to attempt to comply with their wishes in this instance.

The work was entered upon and continued, as opportunity afforded, and finally completed. Whether it is a success or a failure, is left for the reader to decide.

In compiling the work, we have not deviated from the rule we determined to be governed by when we commenced it, viz: To give a clear statement of the facts, as they were set forth in the original MMS, always using his ideas, but liberally appropriating our own language whenever we deemed it necessary to do so. Having observed that rule, we can truthfully say the facts are Mr. Kessler's. The ideas are his also. With a few exceptions, the language is almost wholly our own. Here it should be remarked, however, that as he quit writing the last year that he was stationed in Lancaster City, the facts which relate to the part of his life that was spent from the time he left Lancaster City until his death, have been carefully noted and placed into our hands by his widowed wife, Mrs. Sarah Kessler, of Hummelstown, Pennsylvania.

The reader will notice that neither the conferences within the limits of which Mr.

Kessler labored, nor his ministerial brethren, escape altogether uncensured. But on what person or parties the censure is intended to fall, we have not the remotest idea (nor has the committee); nor do we suppose any will have a correct idea of that fact, except the parties personally concerned, and for whom the censure was intended. These may profit by the reproof, while others may be admonished.

A perusal of the work will reveal the fact that Mr. Kessler was twice married, yet there is not one word said respecting those important events in the history of his life. This is a fact so peculiar, that a word of explanation may be deemed necessary. In the original MS. not one word is said respecting these events, nor the persons to whom he was married—nor are their names mentioned—and we have been reliably informed that it was his desire that should his biography ever appear in a printed form, family history be wholly omitted. Yet as he says enough to give us to understand that he had a family, that he buried his wife, and the fact that we know that his second wife is still living, these facts make an explanation absolutely necessary. Nor is the reader to infer from the frequent occur-

rence of the word "*family*" that Mr. Kessler was the father of children, for he was never blessed with an offspring—he died childless.

That all who peruse this unpretending yet truthful volume may be true believers in the same God that he worshiped, faithful followers of the same Jesus that he so faithfully followed, and partakers of the same great salvation that he became a partaker of, is the sincere prayer of

THE COMPILER.

Hummelstown, Pa., February, 1867.





## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH, PARENTAGE, YOUTH, AND CONVERSION.

Jacob Smith Kessler was born in Sinking Valley, Huntingdon (now Blair) County, Pennsylvania, on the twenty-sixth day of October, one thousand eight hundred and twelve. His father was a respectable mechanic, of limited means. His mother's maiden name was Anna Smith. They were born and raised in the State of Maryland, near Frederick City, and were both admitted to membership in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, by Bishop William Otterbein, the founder of that denomination. Anna Smith's father was one of the first converts Bishop Otterbein had in or about Frederick City, and his house was a home for weary itinerants from the time of his conversion until his death. Among the preachers who were frequently entertained by him were, Otterbein, Geeting, Boehm, and Neidig. Mr. Kessler often heard the devoted piety of Otterbein spoken of in the highest terms at

the house of grandfather Smith. While stopping there he always had a private room to which he would retire, for a short time, to read and pray, after social and religious conversation with the family. Some of his habits were peculiar. Seldom, if ever, would he take his meals at the table with the family. An egg, boiled three or four minutes, and sometimes a little soup, usually constituted his meal, which he preferred eating in his private room. Mr. Kessler's parents were pious from his earliest recollections, and his father's house was a home and a regular preaching place for the United Brethren ministers for twenty-five or thirty years. He was first seriously impressed when about seven or eight years old, and always filled the office of "preacher" for his brothers and sisters during their frequent juvenile attempts at worship. These first serious impressions wore away, however, as years advanced, and did not return until he had reached the age of fourteen; they then returned with redoubled power. On a certain occasion Rev's Boring and Divinny were stopping over night at his father's house. During the evening family devotions, in which Rev. Divinny led, young Kessler was kneeling by the side of the bed, and as the devotions progressed he became so

deeply convicted that he trembled like an aspen leaf. His tears flowed freely; and then and there he could easily have obtained the blessing, by simply casting his burden upon the Lord Jesus, but shame and obstinacy prevented him. Poor, short-sighted worms that we are! How freely and graciously God offers to bless and save us, and how frequently he urges us to accept his proffered mercies; but, blind to our best interests, we resist his pleadings and reject his offers. From that time until he was nineteen years of age, his convictions followed him constantly, frequently causing him much distress of mind. He became more and more deeply impressed with a sense of the great necessity of a change of heart, and was ready to despair of ever obtaining mercy, having so often resisted the strivings of the Spirit. Time passed along, and only by exerting himself to the utmost did he succeed in keeping his convictions and the troubled state of his mind concealed from others. Self-condemned, he was in constant dread, so much so that every unusual disturbance of the elements struck terror into his heart. A clap of thunder or a flash of lightning never failed to send an arrow to his heart, and a hail- or thunder-storm of unusual fierceness had to him the appearance of the

judgment day. In wickedness he was not an adept as were others, but he felt himself to be, as he truly was, a sinner, condemned to die. His habit was to shun the people of God as much as possible; but when his fears of the judgment were unusually excited he would long for their society and counsel. Yet even at such times, if suddenly thrown into their presence, instead of making known his condition, he would conceal his feelings, until betimes his heart was ready to break.

In November, eighteen hundred and thirty-two, another young man with himself determined to slip away secretly to the far West. They started and traveled on foot as far as Blairsville, Indiana County, Pennsylvania. There they found the cholera raging, which as an epidemic was then prevailing to an alarming extent in many of the cities and towns of America. Both his comrade and he had mutually determined to give their hearts to God as soon as they had arrived at their destination in the West, thinking it would be a good opportunity to do so when far from home and friends; but now that they were met by so terrible an epidemic, Mr. Kessler's convictions began to press sorely upon him, and he began to doubt the propriety of deferring his return to God until he had reached a strange



land. He made known to his comrade the state of his mind, and finding no relief, determined at once to return to the home of his childhood. He had eaten but little breakfast, traveled all day, on foot, without dinner, and put up for the night at an inn where a gentleman was stopping, having with him three horses, bound for the East. The next morning the gentleman kindly permitted him to ride one of the horses to within a few miles of home. His desire was to slip home privately, without being seen by any of the neighbors, as he feared their taunts and derisions. But this he was not permitted to do, for it was the Sabbath, and a prayer-meeting at his father's house had drawn many of the neighbors together there. He made his appearance just as the meeting was dismissed, and all eyes were at once turned toward him. Some wept for joy, while others laughed, and his young associates teased and charged him with being "*homesick*."

Their teasing proved to be the very thing he needed. It drove him from the society of his former associates, and left him more free to obey the promptings of his conscience. Severed from the society of wicked young men, he had much time for reflection; and the more he reflected the more pungent became his convic-

tions, and the more he felt like fleeing to Christ for salvation. Timidity was his greatest besetment, for, while he longed to make known to others the state of his mind and ask their prayers and advice, he had not the moral courage to do so.

Alas ! how many are prevented, by this cowardly devil, from coming out boldly upon the side of Christ. How many, through lack of moral courage, stifle their convictions until the insulted Spirit has taken his *everlasting* flight. What ! afraid or ashamed to acknowledge your need of a Savior, when all heaven and all the Christian world already know that without him you are forever undone ! O, terrible stupidity ! damnable cowardice !

The Huntingdon Circuit, which included the appointment at young Kessler's father's house, was traveled that year by Rev. George Gilbert. He preached a sermon in Kessler's uncle's house, from 1st Kings, xviii., 21—"How long halt ye between two opinions ?" Mr. Kessler was present, and every word was like an arrow to his heart. He came to the conclusion that some one had told the preacher of his condition, and the sermon was especially intended for him. The idea of being thus publicly exposed at first

exasperated him; but upon reflection he remembered that he had told no one of his convictions, and felt satisfied that the minister had no knowledge of the state of his mind. This second reflection, while it suppressed his rage, only deepened his convictions and increased his anguish; for it fully convinced him that his case was pointed out in the word of God. Still, he continued to resist the strivings of the Spirit. On the following Christmas eve a watch-meeting was held at the house of Father George Rider, in Warriorsmark, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. This meeting Mr Kessler attended. The hours between dark and midnight were spent in preaching, singing, and praying. After midnight the exercises were changed into love-feast, or experience meeting. Mr. Kessler gave strict attention while one after another arose and narrated their Christian experience. Finally Father Rider arose, and gave a very affecting, careful detail of his conviction and conversion. The solemnity of his manner, the trembling of his voice, by reason of age, and the flowing of his tears, together with his evident sincerity, were all well calculated to make a deep impression upon the entire audience. He was a spiritual man—a



member of the Pennsylvania Conference—and had the entire confidence of the neighbors, far and near. As a minister of the gospel and member of the church, he was eminently useful, preaching frequently in both the English and German languages. In his experience on this occasion, he gave precisely the experience of young Kessler. As Mr. Kessler had resisted the Spirit for many years, so had he; and when he finally declared how mercifully God, for Christ's sake, had accepted him, washed all his sins away, and given him an evidence of his forgiveness, and a bright hope of heaven, hope revived in Kessler's heart, and from that hour he firmly believed that he might obtain pardoning grace. Here is an instance in which we see the great utility of experience- or class-meetings, and the importance of permitting all orderly persons to attend them. Hitherto this young man was kept back from making a full surrender of himself to God, by the false belief that his day of grace was passed; but, by listening to the experience of another, hope was revived in his heart. The meeting was unusually interesting. Many were deeply convicted, and a number designated themselves as seekers. Mr. Kessler, although being most power-

fully convicted, and longing to be released from the bondage of sin, could not shed a single tear; nor did he seem disposed to publicly acknowledge himself a penitent. Several of the ministers present spoke to him. Finally Father Rider addressed him personally, and succeeded in bringing him forward to the mourners' bench. But even there he could not shed a tear, although surrounded by a number of penitents, some of whom were most deeply affected, and a few of whom were converted that night. Among the converts was Catherine, daughter of Father Rider. Shortly after her conversion she left this world in the triumphs of a living faith, and went home to glory. Her father has since followed her. His sun set in a clear sky. Mr. Kessler left the meeting the following morning, his heart more deeply distressed than ever, and went to his daily labor in the neighborhood. The man for whom he was laboring said to him, in a surly manner, "Jake, I do believe you are going to be a Methodist." He replied, "Would to God I were a good Methodist." That silenced him, and nothing more was said on the subject. As Mr. Kessler had no further opportunity to seek religion in the public con-

gregation, he continued to do so privately. The following winter he boarded with his uncle, Jacob Smith, in Logan's Valley, and attended school. He was still sick at heart, and continued to seek for relief in the merits of a crucified Savior. The language of his heart was, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" He prayed aloud morning and evening, and oftener as opportunity afforded, for it was a fixed determination with him to continue to pray and seek, even if he should perish while seeking. On the evening of the 23d of February 1833, he was left alone at the house of his uncle, the latter, with his family, having gone to the house of his son, half a mile distant, to spend the evening. This he deemed a good opportunity for reading and meditation. He took the large family Bible and read until ten o'clock, and then concluded to pray before retiring. He selected and sung the hymn commencing,

"Father, I stretch my hands to thee,  
No other help I know,"

and then kneeled for prayer. He prayed silently for a time, for he feared that his uncle and aunt might be returning and hear him, and, sometimes thinking he heard them approach-

ing the door, would stop and listen. He still continued to pray, however, in his silent way, when suddenly it seemed as if a literal light had broken in upon his soul, and a literal burden had been rolled from his shoulders. All dread and fear were at once removed, and he found himself praising God with a loud voice; nor would he have been ashamed to do so though the whole world had been present, for he felt, as did David, that he could run through a troop or leap over a wall. That moment was never forgotten by him. How could he forget that sweet peace and comfort that then flowed, for the first time, through his soul like a mighty river? He has sometimes been of the opinion that the evidence of his acceptance with God was brighter than it would have been, had he been *first* blessed in the midst of a multitude of happy Christians; for being all alone, he unmistakably realized that there was no influence present but the power of the Holy Spirit. And praying silently, as he was at the time, he was fully convinced that the change he there experienced was not the result of animal excitement or animal magnetism. Shortly after this he retired in very happy frame of mind, supposing



that as his joy was full it would be perpetual. In this, however, he soon found himself mistaken, for immediately a sore trial presented itself. The question arose in his mind as to whether or not he should inform his uncle and aunt of the happy change he had experienced. Many reasons presented themselves, why he should not do so immediately. He might fall back, as many others had done, and if he had made a public profession previously his falling back would bring a much greater reproach upon the cause of God; or he would be called upon to exercise publicly in the prayer- and class-meeting, if he made public profession, and his young associates would deride him as a professor of religion. Thus his mind was harrassed; and he was about to determine that he would tell no one of what God had done for him—at least not for some time to come—when suddenly his memory recalled the many vows he had made to God, as to how faithfully he would serve him in *public* and in private, if he would only pardon his sins and give him a satisfactory evidence of his acceptance with him. Immediately he determined that as soon as he arose from his bed the following morning, he would inform both his uncle and aunt

of his happy conversion in their house, during their absence. This restored his peace of mind, and with that resolve in his heart he fell asleep, and rested sweetly until morning. On awakening the next morning his joy was full, and as soon as he found his way into the presence of his uncle and aunt he informed them of all that he had experienced. They were greatly rejoiced, and assured him that they had been earnestly beseeching God in his behalf for a long time. His uncle, the one here referred to, had embraced religion many years previous, under the pastoral labors of Rev. William Otterbein, and often spoke very commendably of the self-sacrificing piety and brilliant talents of that eminent divine. Both he and his wife have long since fallen asleep in Jesus. Mr. Kessler's joy was now complete. His peace flowed like a river. He could read his title clear, to mansions in the sky. And the language of his heart was:

“Jesus all the day long  
Was my joy and my song,  
O, that all his salvation might see.”

And most firmly did he resolve,

“Never more will I stray,  
From my Savior away,  
But I'll follow the Lamb till I die;  
I will take up my cross  
And count all things but loss,  
Till I meet with my Lord in the sky.”



## CHAPTER II.

CALL TO THE MINISTRY—LICENSED TO EXHORT—LICENSED TO  
PREACH.

The morning succeeding, Mr. Kessler's conversion he went about his work in a joyful mood, for he felt that he was a new man in Christ Jesus. The consciousness of guilt, and of the impending wrath of a justly-displeased God, no longer weighed down his soul. He felt free—free from the bondage of sin and death; and a personal, soul-cheering assurance of the forgiveness, love, and friendship of the omnipotent God, through Jesus Christ his Son, such as he then possessed, completely dispersed all fear. Having attended to the stock, he repaired to the wood-yard, to chop until school-time. He had not been thus engaged very long when a voice within seemed to say, "You must preach the gospel." This alarmed him. He instantly dropped the ax, and leaning upon the helve exclaimed to himself, what does all this mean? And from whence is this

command? This, thought he, can never come to pass. He could never preach the gospel. He did not possess the necessary natural or acquired qualifications for that all-important office. His opportunities for attending school had been very inferior, the common schools only being in session during the three winter months of each year, and they situated at such a distance that, when only a lad, it was not possible for him to attend regularly. And when a young man, his services were required by his parents. Hence, when he had reached the age of twenty, he knew nothing of geography or grammar, and was barely able to read and write, and solve a few examples in arithmetic. This being the case, it is not strange that the impression upon his mind, that he was to preach the gospel, alarmed him. He was troubled with impressions of this character, continually, for more than a year before he spoke of it to any one. Finally he mentioned it to his uncle, a Mr. Bottenberg, an aged man, and an experienced Christian, who was at the time filling the office of class-leader in the church. Mr. Bottenberg consulted a United Brethren minister respecting the case, and was instructed by him to advise

Mr. Kessler to be faithful in the discharge of Christian duty, and to make his convictions respecting the ministry a subject of special secret prayer, assuring him that if they were of God they would increase, and if not they would wear away. Mr. Kessler being thus instructed, did so with much sincerity; and the oftener he prayed over these convictions the more deeply he became impressed that it was his duty to enter the ministry. A burning, depressing anxiety for the salvation of souls weighed mightily upon him, and he felt that inasmuch as God had so mercifully revealed himself to him, as a sin-pardoning God, he was under obligations to devote his life to telling others what great things God had done for him, and endeavor to lead souls to that same gracious Savior. His serious, zealous deportment attracted the attention of his aged and more experienced Christian associates, and soon he was urged by them to lead their prayer-meetings. His first attempt in this direction made a lasting impression upon his mind. The house—a private dwelling—was well filled with people, and on rising behind the table to open the meeting his timidity, and a solemn awe, so well nigh overcame

him that he almost fainted. He found it necessary to support himself, while reading the first chapter of the First Epistle of John, by leaning with one hand upon the table. The chapter read, he said but a few words, kneeled for prayer, and the meeting was continued for an hour by singing and praying alternately. He then closed it, feeling deeply his weakness, but in possession of a sweet peace of soul, the result of a consciousness of having honestly endeavored to do what he felt to be his duty.

Thus the year 1833 passed away without any thing special occurring, further than above narrated. He was, during that time, mostly engaged on a saw-mill in Logan's Valley, Blair County, Pennsylvania, and in farming a little. During all his itinerant labors in the ministry that same solemn awe, that so deeply impressed him the evening he for the first time rose to open meeting, always very sensibly impressed him, on rising to preach. The weight of responsibility resting upon him, and the welfare of souls, never failed to make him tremble while in the pulpit. And why should he not tremble? The words that were to fall from his lips might tell for



weal or woe upon the destiny of immortal souls. Great is the responsibility of the Christian minister; and Mr. Kessler felt it, and that made him tremble.

The year 1834, he took his cousin's farm to crop, purchased a horse, and was resolved to settle himself in the world. Consequently his mind became much occupied about worldly interests, and his religious zeal began to wane. But right here his worldly plans were frustrated, and his prospective occupation for life completely abandoned through the instrumentality of what, ever after, seemed to him to be a strange interposition of Providence. Having some business to transact with his father, who then resided in Sinking Valley, he mounted his horse one morning and rode over for that purpose. About noon heavy thunder-gusts passed around. One passed over the lower end of the valley; and the lightning struck a large new barn, killed two men, stunned a third, and setting fire to the barn, consumed it with all its contents. This barn was on a farm not very far distant from where his father resided, and was consumed while he was at his father's house. The shower over, he set out to return to his new home. On his way he had to pass by a school-



house in which a United Brethren preacher was to preach that afternoon. He stopped for preaching. His cousin resided near by; and as there was much appearance of rain, he put his horse in his cousin's stable. The minister for whom the appointment had been announced did not make his appearance, and those present concluded to hold a prayer-meeting. The meeting was commenced, and by the time two or three prayers had been offered, a heavy thunder-storm was at hand. Terrific thunders rolled; vivid lightnings flashed! One terrible crash shook the house, made the windows jingle, and stunned all within it. Mr. Kessler, on rising from his knees, (they were engaged in prayer when the crash came,) looked through the window toward his cousin's barn, and observing evidences that the barn was struck, informed his cousin that such was the case. They ran to the barn, and found that a hen and Mr. Kessler's horse, the only living creatures in the barn at the time it was struck, had been killed by the lightning. The electric current, passing from the top of the barn down through the grain, took effect on the horse near the withers, and left on him a special evidence of its destroying power. It

was soon discovered that the barn was on fire; but the timely assistance of all who were present at the meeting prevented its being reduced to ashes. The loss of Mr. Kessler's horse was to him, at that time, a heavy one, and he regarded it as a stroke of the chastening rod of the Almighty, inflicted upon him for refusing to heed the many calls God had given him to the ministry. He at once resolved to cut himself loose from the world, and all its allurements, and give himself wholly to the cause of his Master. That fall, at a meeting held in Center County, he received license to exhort, and the winter following he paid a visit to his relatives, who were then residing near Frederick City, Maryland.

During this visit he became acquainted with Valentine Doup, one of the good old fathers in Israel. He attended a meeting at Doup's house, and the good old man would have him speak. He did so with great liberty and power; remained over night at the house, and had much interesting and instructive conversation with the aged father. The following morning, when about to take leave of him, the aged veteran held his horse for several minutes, exhorted him to faithfulness in the

service of God, and urged him to give himself at once wholly to the work of the ministry, assuring him that the Lord had a work for him to do in that direction. These admonitions were not forgotten by Mr. Kessler. They made an indelible impression upon his mind, and he left the aged father with a wiser head and a softer heart than when he met him.

Soon after this he left Maryland for home, fully resolved to attend the next session of the Pennsylvania Conference of the United Brethren in Christ, and present himself as an applicant for license to preach the gospel. In due time he reached his home in safety, and earnestly betook himself to the work of making preparation for conference. During this time he was much engaged in prayer. His desire was to be directed by the Lord; and for this he earnestly prayed, often beseeching God if he were not called to the ministry to put it into the hearts of the brethren in conference assembled to refuse him license.

The place for the sitting of the conference was Shopp's church, near Shiremanstown, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. The time arrived, and Mr. Kessler set out for conference, in company with Rev. John Wallace.

After a tedious journey on horseback, of one hundred and twenty miles, in the month of April, 1834, they arrived at the place appointed for the assembling of that body. His mind was now in a state of perfect ease and quietude. He had sincerely committed his case to the Lord, and he felt that should the conference refuse him a license or grant it, he, in either case, would be perfectly satisfied, for his confidence was that the decision of that body relative to his case would be as the Lord would direct, and that would be right, and by that he was willing to abide. When once in the conference room he was very favorably impressed with the appearance of the men who composed that body, and with the spirit of true piety and brotherly love that seemed to prevail and characterize all their deliberations. There were venerable fathers in Israel, whose silvered locks, grave manners, and wise counsels, were well calculated to give dignity and weight to the deliberations of that body. Prominent among these was Father John Neidig, who had descended from the Mennonite order, and was still distinguished by some of the peculiarities of that sect, such as wearing the hair moderately



long, parted straight over the crown of the head, the round-bodied coat, &c. His appearance was neat, dignified, and impressive; and in the pulpit he was a very sound, successful minister of the gospel, used good language (German), and was impressive, both in word and gesture. He served several years as pastor of the Baltimore station, was very successful there, and, in the neighborhood where he resided, wielded a most powerful influence for good. In conference he said but little, but when he did speak his words were carefully listened to by all, and his views generally adopted. He was truly "a son of consolation," and a most amiable companion. Mr. Kessler, after forming his acquaintance, was very fond of conversing with him, and he well remembers a conversation they had on the subject of baptism, in the year 1840. About that time the subject of Christian baptism was much agitated, and in convention with Father Neidig, at the time above mentioned, Mr. Kessler remarked that many persons objected to baptizing infants because it is not positively commanded in the Bible. He replied in a very impressive manner, "*das ist auch nicht verboten.*" (*It is not forbidden.*)



This remark, made as it was by the aged minister in his own peculiarly solemn manner, had a convincing power in it, well calculated to impress the hearer with the folly of "multiplying words to no profit" respecting practices introduced into the Christian church by great and good men, concerning which there is no definite rule laid down in the word of God. But pardon this digression.

Among the venerable divines composing the conference, besides Mr. Neidig, who were long remembered by Mr. Kessler, were Abraham Hershey, Christian Hershey, John Schneider, John Crider, Felix Light, and John Light. These were all men of sound mind, firm faith, deep piety, self-denying devotion, fervent zeal, and unimpeachable character. Consequently, they wielded a powerful influence for good in the communities where they labored. True, they were men of limited abilities, so far as a literary and scientific education is concerned; but having been trained in the school of Christ's regenerating and saving grace, with hearts filled with the power of God's redeeming love, they went forth, and by their efficient labors proved themselves to be chosen vessels, powerful instruments, mighty through God in

pulling down the strongholds of sin, and in building up the Redeemer's kingdom. Mr. Kessler long remembered a visit paid by him to one of these fathers in Israel (Felix Light), then residing in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Father Light requested him to accompany him on a visiting tour through the town. He consented, and they set off together. But such visiting! The old father seemed intent on visiting every resident in the town. House after house they entered. All seemed to know Father Light. He conversed freely with the residents respecting their health and condition; but most particularly did he inquire of the state of their souls, always imparting such advice, warning, and encouragement, as the nature of the case seemed to demand. In the pulpit Father Light was an eloquent, zealous reasoner, and had many seals to his ministry.

The session of conference passed along pleasantly. At length the names of applicants for license to preach the gospel were called for, when among others Mr. Kessler's name was handed in. When called, he arose in his seat, said a few words, and withdrew from the room, much overcome with timidity. After his case had been acted upon, in his absence, at was

the custom, he was recalled to learn the result. The presiding bishop, William Brown, informed him that conference had decided that he should appear before a committee for further examination. The time for the sitting of that committee arrived, and he appeared before them. But the appearance of such men as Neidig and Schneider on the committee had a very disheartening influence upon him. At first he was much confused, and the committee saw it. Hence, instead of proceeding at once with the examination, they commenced to converse on familiar topics, and continued thus until his embarrassment was driven away, and then they proceeded with the examination proper. The examination concluded, he withdrew, with but little hope of a favorable result, and was kept in suspense until the following morning, the committee not reporting sooner. Morning came, and soon after the opening of conference the report of the committee was called for and read. It was favorable. The conference adopted it, and in due time Mr. Kessler's license was presented him by the Bishop. There being no field of labor to which in the opinion of the conference he was adapted, he was left without one, and at the close

of the session returned home and betook himself to manual labor. Who can imagine the feelings of his heart as he journeyed homeward? He had attended, for the first time in his life, a meeting composed of ministers of the gospel, met for the sole purpose of comparing experiences, hearing reports, and transacting business pertaining to the interests of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He had become a member of that body, and was now officially commissioned to engage in the all-important, responsible, soul-trying, heaven-originated work of an evangelist. O, what a sense of responsibility; what a crushing consciousness of inefficiency scourged and weighed down his soul. And on the other hand, what a feeling of profound thankfulness to God for his goodness in calling him to this work, and what an abiding confidence in his willingness and ability to supply all deficiencies! Absorbed in these musings and feelings, we leave Mr. Kessler. His prayer was:

Lord of hosts, go with thy servant,  
And with love his soul inflame;  
Touch his tongue with holy fire,  
That he may thy truth proclaim.



## CHAPTER III.

INITIATION INTO THE ITINERANCY—FIRST YEAR'S EXPERIENCE—  
ENCOURAGEMENTS—DISCOURAGEMENTS—HARDSHIPS—PERILS—  
REVIVALS—OPPOSITIONS—CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION, &c., &c.

Mr. Kessler returned from conference, where he had received license. Up to this time he had never attempted to preach from a text, all his efforts at public speaking having been put forth in the shape of exhortations. Now something more was demanded and expected. Thus he felt; and to meet this demand he at once set about preparing himself, although without a special field of labor. This work was engaged in with much earnestness and prayer.

Early in the summer of 1835 an appointment was announced for him, to preach at the house of Father Keller, in Canoe Valley, Blair County (then Huntingdon), Pennsylvania. At the time appointed he came, and found the house crowded with people, many of whom were young persons who had come



more for sport and through curiosity, than from any other motive. After he had done speaking he held class-meeting, for which nearly all the congregation remained. In passing from one to another, hearing their experience and imparting words of instruction and encouragement, he laid his hand upon the head of a robust young man of large stature, and inquired of him if he did not feel the importance of making his peace with God. The young giant, for such he was in stature, suddenly commenced to weep and tremble; and falling upon his knees he began to call mightily upon God for mercy. The praying people gathered around, sang and prayed with him, and soon he was most powerfully converted. Since then that same man has become a very exemplary and successful minister of the gospel, and has filled every office in the church except that of bishop.

Shortly after his first effort, Mr. Kessler was called upon to fill an appointment, and repaired to the place for that purpose. There was a large congregation in attendance. He went through with the opening exercises, announced his text, and introduced his subject with a

distinct voice, and, what seemed to him to be, ease and fluency. But no sooner had he entered upon the first division of his subject than his mind became completely confused. The thoughts that he had intended to present all left him; and after a few vain efforts to rally his fugitive ideas, he sat down completely overwhelmed and confounded. A local minister present took up the subject, handled it for a short time with comparative ease, and the meeting was closed. Mr. Kessler went home fully resolved never to attempt to preach again. Rev. Frederick Gilbert was in charge of the circuit on which Mr. Kessler resided, and when he came to that appointment, the young preacher who had so signally failed made all his troubles known to his pastor. On hearing them, Mr. Gilbert remarked as follows: "How good it is that the Lord sometimes leaves us to ourselves, that we may the better see our entire helplessness and great need of his assistance." These words were like oil to the wounded, discouraged heart of Mr. Kessler, and he saw the folly of the hasty resolve never to try to preach again. He broke that resolve, feeling assured that it was better to break an unwise, rash vow, than to

keep it; and the next time he attempted to preach it went better with him.

Thus he spent his time from April till August, working with his hands through the week and preaching on Sabbath. The Huntingdon Circuit, on which Mr. Gilbert was laboring, was very large, the distance around it being nearly three hundred miles—embracing the territory which now constitutes Huntingdon, Blair, and Center counties—and comprised in all about forty appointments. This circuit had to be traveled by Mr. Gilbert once in every four weeks, and all the appointments filled. Hence the reader will not be surprised to learn that he had begun to feel very much the need of a colleague. He spoke to Mr. Kessler of his labors, and urged him to join in and assist him. He consented, procured an outfit, consisting of a horse, saddle, saddle-pockets, and a few clothes, and joined Mr. Gilbert in his labors. This seemed to displease some in the neighborhood where he had been brought up, and they spoke out freely in most condemnatory terms of such rashness, pronouncing him too young and inexperienced to accomplish any thing as a minister of the gospel. It was about camp-meet-

ing time when Mr. Kessler joined Mr. Gilbert; and there were two meetings of this kind to be held on their charge that year, one in Center and one in Huntingdon County. That in Center County passed off very pleasantly, and much good was accomplished; but at the one in Huntingdon County the quarterly conference was to convene, and the young preacher must, according to what was then a custom, be taken down a little by that body, "lest he become proud." Some official members were present who evinced much more penuriousness and obstinacy than charity and Christian liberality. The bone of contention was the question respecting the employment of Mr. Kessler to assist Mr. Gilbert during the remainder of the year. Objections were raised upon the ground that they could not support more than one man. Mr. Kessler deliberately informed them that if his services were not needed and not requested, he could easily dispose of his outfit and return to manual labor. To this Mr. Gilbert firmly objected, and demanded that Mr. Kessler be employed, proposing that he would take up a collection at every appointment on the charge, toward the end of the year, for him. This



settled the matter. The objectors—dogs in the manger, who neither eat the hay nor permit the hungry cattle to eat it—reluctantly yielded, and he was employed to travel till the next sitting of the annual conference. Contrary to the predictions of the objectors, there were plenty of houses and hearts open to receive both the pastor and his young colleague; and before the year closed there were some most precious revivals on the charge, and a goodly number added to the church. This, however, was accomplished, and the time employed, not without many hardships and trials endured by the ministers. The winter was a severe one, and the roads traveled by them of the most rough, mountainous, and impracticable character. Mountains had to be crossed no less than seven times in making one round; and the distance between some of the appointments was from twenty-five to thirty miles. In some parts the itinerant traveled for eight miles without seeing a dwelling. Deep snows had to be waded, and rivers, whose rapid currents threatened to sweep down all that ventured within their banks, had to be forded. One time is especially remembered by Mr. Kessler—when he attempted to ford the Juniatta, and it was



partly frozen over. His horse became entangled in the ice, and he found it necessary to dismount and break a path through to the shore for the animal. This required time, and the poor brute almost perished. At another time, having several appointments to reach—which lay on the opposite side of the Bald Eagle Creek from where he was—he rode several miles to the fording, and found the stream so much swollen that it filled its banks; and, not feeling certain that his horse was a good swimmer, he turned and rode away, not deeming it prudent to attempt to cross. He soon turned, however, and rode up to the fording a second time, and again turned and rode away. Again he turned, rode up to the fording, and plunged his horse into the angry waters. The animal proved to be a good swimmer and carried him across in safety, not, however, without being washed considerably below the fording. Again safe on *terra firma*, Mr. Kessler, like Paul, thanked God, took courage, and in due time reached his appointments.

On making his first round after the camp-meeting, he had an appointment to meet in Millheim, Center County, and there received such a rebuff as well nigh overwhelmed him.

It was an evening appointment, in the village school-house. The audience was large; and he preached as well as he could, but was considerably embarrassed by the presence of the Presiding Elder and two other ministers. The following morning he was sitting in a room alone, reading his Bible, and the man with whom he had lodged was at work in an adjoining apartment. A member of another denomination came in and commenced conversing with Mr. Kessler's host in such a distinct tone of voice that he (Kessler) heard all that was said. The conversation soon turned to the young man who had attempted to preach the previous evening. Said the man to the host, "He had better go home and go to work, for it is absolutely certain that he will never make a preacher." This was a source of great temptation to Mr. Kessler. The devil had frequently told him the same story before, but it had not come with such crushing force as it did now, when falling from the lips of his fellow-man. He got his horse and left at once, reasoning in his own mind whether he should go directly home or meet the appointments already announced for him. He finally concluded to meet one more appointment that evening; and coming to a retired spot

he rode into the woods a distance from the road, dismounted, fastened his horse, fell upon his knees, and commenced to pray very earnestly for light and guidance from on high. He especially besought the Almighty that he would that evening, in an especial manner, if he had called him to preach, give him an unmistakable evidence of the fact. If he were called of the Lord to preach he desired to preach, and if not called of him he wished to cease at once all attempts to do so. Most of the day was spent weeping and praying, that if called to preach, God would that evening own the effort and bless the Word to the edification of his children and the conviction and conversion of sinners. Night came, and the meeting was one of power. The Word was blessed, saints rejoiced, sinners were convicted, and souls happily converted to God. O what a feast and relief this was to Mr. Kessler's soul. He no longer doubted his call to the ministry; and with a heart full of thanksgiving, and a humble trust, he could say, "O Lord, I will praise thee; for unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, thou hast given this grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." From that day he was never so much tempted respecting his call to the min-

istry as before, and never did he pass the grove in which he, on that day, so devoutly wrestled with God in prayer, without turning aside, halting in the place, and offering up a fervent petition. That spot, from that day, became a kind of Bethel to him. There his soul was often refreshed, when his body was almost exhausted with the weariness of his journey.

Once every four weeks he had an appointment to fill in his father's house. This was a sore trial to him. Naturally timid and bashful, the thought of standing in his father's house, and preaching to an assembly composed mostly of those with whom he had been acquainted from his childhood, with whom he had attended the district school, engaged in games of ball and participated in all manner of childish sports and mischievous tricks, was almost more than he could brook. Some of his former associates were still ungodly, and were present only to embarrass or intimidate him. But duty must be discharged here at home as well as elsewhere; so he braved the trial, and preached as best he could under the circumstances. And it pleased God to bless his efforts in the conversion of some of "the baser sort" of his former companions.

In March, 1836, he attended, for the second



time, the annual session of conference, which convened in Lebanon, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. The attendance of the members of conference was unusually large, the reports and deliberations interesting, and every thing connected with the session passed off pleasantly. Mr. Kessler was returned to the Huntingdon Circuit as colleague to Rev. Enoch Hoffman, preacher in charge. The co-laborers betook themselves to the work assigned them hopefully, prayerfully, and energetically; were punctual in meeting all their appointments, and zealous in their endeavors to push forward the victories of the Cross.

During the first three months, Mr. Kessler's experience was quite monotonous. Not a trial assailed him; not once did he feel discouraged, nor, on the other hand, did he experience a single feeling of joy or realize a single special blessing. He was faithful in the discharge of duty, punctual in meeting his appointments, much engaged in visiting from house to house, conversing with the people on the subject of religion, and praying with them. And although others could feel and weep under his preaching, not a single emotion of concern, dread, or joy did he experience; not a tear did he shed.



About this time, the doctrine of entire sanctification was much agitated in the church, and, among others, he became concerned respecting it. He commenced examining his own heart, and praying for a deeper work of grace. Soon he experienced a most powerful blessing, similar to that experienced when he was first converted. His energies and zeal thus revived; and his co-laborer being similarly aroused, they went to work in good earnest, and had the satisfaction of seeing their labors abundantly blessed. Revivals occurred at various points on their charge. The church was much refreshed and its numbers greatly increased. Truly, "judgment must begin at the house of God."

Mr. Kessler had taken up an appointment the year previous at a village in Center County, where there had been no preaching for years. At one time the Methodists had preached there, but had, long since, abandoned the place as unfruitful soil. There resided one poor man in the place who was very desirous of having preaching, and who willingly offered to lodge the preacher. Mr. Kessler preached several times in the old village school-house, but finally the opposition became so great that it was

deemed expedient to remove the appointment to a carpenter's shop of but small dimensions, in which the preacher's host wrought at his trade. Here the preacher and the few who assembled to hear, were often much annoyed by the hooting, threatening, cursing, and profanity of the ungodly, who gathered round the building for the purpose of breaking up the meeting. He continued to preach at this place once every four weeks during the summer. At first the congregations were very small, but they increased slowly in numbers until the attendance was as large as the shop would admit of. About twenty young men and women became regular attendants, and frequently remained after preaching for experience meeting, and gave evidence of seriousness.

In the fall of 1836 Mr. Kessler held a protracted meeting at this place, assisted by Father Rider. On Saturday evening, after preaching, an invitation was extended to persons wishing to seek religion, to come forward and kneel at the much-despised but heaven-owned mourners' bench. Quite a number came forward. Just then an intelligent young lady, whose countenance gave evidence of deep concern of mind, arose and left the house in great haste. On

seeing this Mr. Kessler concluded that she had become offended and fled from the meeting in a rage. He felt much grieved at the thought. But great was his surprise just then, at seeing her re-enter the house, deliberately walk forward to and kneel at the mourners' bench, and commence, in most piteous tones, to cry for mercy. It was afterward ascertained that instead of having left the house in anger, she had only gone to ask permission of her father, who was a very strict Quaker, to go forward and seek religion. Her father, who loved her much, on observing her sorrow and great sincerity, in reply to her request, only said, "I will not stand in thy way. Thou art at liberty to go." Sensible, kind father was he indeed! Wisely did he decide not to hedge up the way of his child, when she was ready to make a desperate effort to escape out of the bondage of sin into the light and liberty of God's dear children. Her conduct made a deep impression upon the minds of all; and the meeting was progressing finely, when suddenly a man, apparently in the excitement of anger, rushed into the house, and dragged his daughter from the mourners' bench and hurried her off home. He was a member of the Presbyterian Church,

and, as was afterward learned, had been incensed against the meeting by evil reports carried to his ears by malicious persons. On this information he had hastily acted, but was heartily sorry for and ashamed of his conduct afterward. The day following, Mr. Kessler and Mr. Rider visited through the village, and called at the house of both the Quaker and Presbyterian. At both places they were received kindly. The Quaker father declared himself well pleased that his daughter had begun to seek religion, and the Presbyterian said he was sorry for his conduct the previous evening; that he had been misinformed, or it would not have occurred, and that his daughter was at perfect liberty, henceforth, to obey her own convictions. The revival continued until nearly every resident of the village was converted, and two large classes formed, one by the United Brethren and one by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

About five miles from this village, Mr. Kessler took up another appointment. Here quite a number of young persons attended meeting very regularly, and among them the son of a Quaker. He was a very good singer, and usually led the singing; and though unconverted,



he sustained a good moral character. He was quite influential among the young people of the neighborhood, and being well disposed toward religious meetings did much, both by his influence and example, toward securing good order. Here, shortly after the close of the meeting above described, Mr. Kessler held a meeting, and had the unspeakable satisfaction of seeing a goodly number of persons happily converted, and among them the young man above referred to. A society was formed, and in process of time a commodious house of worship was erected. At another appointment, the same year, there were about twenty young persons deeply convicted, who wished to be taken into the church through the medium of catechising. This was also the request of their parents, and they would consent to no other procedure. Mr. Kessler doubted the propriety of adopting such a course, consulted with some of the older brethren respecting the matter, and finally refused to proceed in that way. Shortly after, a young minister of a sister denomination came along, catechised and, took them all into his church. This grieved Mr. Kessler's heart greatly, for he had great fears that those convictions which had been awaken-



ed in their hearts would now be smothered. They would suppose that they had done all that was required, and consequently stop short of genuine conversion. He did not condemn catechetical instruction. He regarded it as a very good thing *in its place*, but when made a door into the church and substituted for heart-felt regeneration, he considered it as much a doctrine of anti-Christ as the infallibility of the Pope or the power of the priests to forgive sins, and as much a curse as the practice of selling indulgences. Christ says, "*I am the door*;" and why should we substitute a theoretical knowledge of him, as imparted by catechetical instruction, for an experimental, saving knowledge of him, as revealed through conviction, repentance, and conversion.

The conference year now drew to a close, and when winding up his labors on the Huntingdon Circuit and taking a retrospect of the past, Mr. Kessler felt that God had been very good to him, and he had great reason to be encouraged. True, so far as remuneration for his labors in the way of receiving money is concerned, he had but little to cheer him, having received but eighty dollars during the year,

and a few presents of trifling account. But he was not discouraged, and prepared to attend the next session of the conference with a light and peaceful heart.

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## CHAPTER IV.

JUNIATA CIRCUIT — DISCOURAGEMENTS — HARDSHIPS — REVIVALS —  
CONFERENCE AT WORMLEYSBURG — ALLEGHANY CONFERENCE —  
SLAVERY QUESTION — BISHOP HEISTAND — ORDAINED AN ELDER.

In the spring of 1837 the conference convened at Fetterhoff Chapel, Franklin County, Pennsylvania. After a pleasant and interesting session it adjourned, having assigned Mr. Kessler to the Juniata Circuit. This field of labor lay in Perry, Juniata, and Mifflin counties. The membership was weak, the appointments many miles distant from each other, and the roads mostly rough and mountainous. He started for his circuit, reached it, and commenced his first round; but before it was completed his horse, one day, caught fast with

one of its hind feet among some roots, in a swampy piece of road, fell, and was unable to rise until an ax was procured and the roots that held it fast were cut away. The animal was so badly injured that it could not be used for several weeks. A kind brother loaned him a horse until his was fit again for use; but it came very near dying of disease while in his hands. These things, together with the fact that he was alone on a circuit for the first time, almost quite discouraged him; at least so much so that at one time he resolved to resign his charge, and left for that purpose. But while fleeing, Jonah-like, from the task assigned him, he happened to call at the house of David Bair, in Franklin County, who was a faithful old servant in the church, and a great nursing father to young ministers. He soon discovered in Mr. Kessler's manner and countenance, indications that convinced him that all was not well, and immediately commenced a series of inquiries, as to whence he came, whither he was going, how his soul prospered, and whether his sky was clear. Thus questioned, Mr. Kessler gave him a full account of all his mishaps and discouragements, his hardships, and gloomy prospects. The old father soon furnished a

balm for every wound, a cordial for every fear; and after counseling with him a few hours, and receiving words of instruction and encouragement from his lips, the disheartened, flying itinerant faced about and returned to his charge, fully resolved to spend the year on it, and honestly endeavor to accomplish all the good he could, and willingly commit the results to Him who doeth all things well. The result was, that that year proved, perhaps, the most successful of his whole itinerant life. Houses and hearts were opened for him; several revival meetings were held, and a number of souls happily converted to God.

At one of his appointments, his congregation was composed chiefly of members of the Presbyterian Church. He was lodged by their elders, and received many marks of kindness at their hands. At one place he was invited to preach in the house of a man who made no profession of religion. He responded to this invitation, and made an appointment. Conviction took hold on his heart and that of his wife, and they both promised faithfully to seek God in the pardon of their sins, before the conference year closed. On the last round, it was agreed to hold a watch-meeting in their



house. The meeting was well attended, and mourners invited. As this man and woman, up to this time, had not fulfilled their promise, they were reminded of the fact, and of the importance of embracing this, their last opportunity. At first they were not willing to yield. But as the meeting increased in interest, their convictions became more pungent, and finally they broke down and commenced to cry for mercy; and before the morning dawned they were both rejoicing in a Savior's love. It was a season of special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and of great rejoicing among the people of God. An incident, seemingly miraculous, was witnessed on this occasion, and it may not be improper to record it. A young man was present at this meeting, who had embraced religion some time previous. He became happy, and falling backward, threw the back of his hand across a very hot stove, where it lay for some time, when some one removed it. All who witnessed it supposed that his hand was horribly burned. Even the next morning several persons called at his house to ascertain the extent of his injury. But great was their surprise on being informed that there was not the mark of fire upon the young man's hand. Some



may pronounce this fanaticism; but it is a well-authenticated, stubborn fact, all assertions to the contrary notwithstanding.

During this year Mr. Kessler had but little ministerial assistance, partly owing to the fact that his field of labor was much out of the way, and partly because there were but two local ministers on his circuit. These were David Bair and David Fleck. They were devout, zealous men, of good repute, and, as far as they could, cheerfully co-operated with and assisted him. Their assistance excepted, he labored alone, feeling, betimes, greatly the need of some co-worker on whom to lay a part of the arduous duties to be performed. The latter part of the year being a very sickly period, Mr. Kessler had a severe attack of fever, from which he suffered much, and which well nigh carried him to his grave. By tender nursing, however, he recovered, and continued his labors. But many who resided within the bounds of his circuit fell victims to the destroying pestilence. Children died in great numbers; so much so that almost every house was draped in mourning.

During the year he took up a number of new appointments in remote portions of the coun-

try, inhabited by very poor people. He visited among them from house to house, lodged with them, and shared their hospitalities. The best they had was cheerfully given him; but their poverty was such that even the best was small in quantity and very inferior in quality. For months at a time he did not see a morsel of wheat bread. Buckwheat, oats, and corn, constituted the food upon which the people among whom he labored subsisted. On such diet he could live very comfortably, and never felt like uttering a complaint on account of the treatment he received. But the utter impossibility, betimes, of securing food for his horse, was a source of frequent and distressing annoyance to him. For days and weeks did the poor brute have to go without a handful of grain, subsisting wholly on grass, hay, corn-fodder, &c. Often would he gladly have purchased grain to feed him, but money was almost non-existent there. For months did he go without a dollar in his pocket. If his horse lost a shoe, he would stop at a blacksmith shop, ask the smith to replace the shoe, intending to request him to trust him until he had money enough to pay. But when the good smith replied, in answer to the question, "what is the bill?"

“I do not charge ministers,” after expressing many thanks, he would mount his horse, and ride away with a merry heart. Frequently, during this year, he suffered most severely with cold, while lodging with poor people. One night was especially remembered by him. It was terribly cold and stormy, and the room in which he was lodged was so open that the wind whistled through the cracks from all points of the compass. When shown to his room he found, upon examination, that the bed consisted of a chaff-tick, with but little chaff in it, a muslin sheet, a threadbare blanket, and a light calico quilt. He piled his clothing upon this, and vainly tried to sleep. The wind savagely blew, the old house shook, and Mr. Kessler lay shivering with cold. About midnight he arose, went to the head of the stairs, and called for his cloak and saddle-cover, the latter a large bear-skin. He placed the bear-skin in the bed to lie upon, and his cloak over him, and then was enabled to sleep a little. Many nights were spent much in the same way. But he cheerfully bore all these sufferings and privations, and often rejoiced because of being permitted to preach the gospel to a poor, simple-minded people, who were so glad to learn of him the way of life and salvation.

At the close of the year, the footing up of his accounts showed that he had received for the year's services one hundred and seven dollars—a small amount, indeed, on which to subsist a family.

In the spring of 1838, conference convened at Wormleysburg, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Bishop Hiestand presided, assisted by Bishop Erb. It was very largely attended; and during the session a portion of the territory included in the Pennsylvania Conference was stricken off and formed into a separate conference, and christened "Alleghany." With this division, a number of the ministers of the Pennsylvania Conference were separated from that body; and their places being vacated, her itinerant ranks were pretty well thinned. The names of those set apart to constitute the Alleghany Conference were as follows: John Rider, Harmanus Orr, John R. Sitman, George Miller, Jacob Ritter, John Wallace, John G. Schneider, Wm. Beighel, Adolphus Harnden, Henry Kephart, David Runk, and some others.

At this conference session the propriety of opening the columns of the Religious Telescope for discussing the evils of American slavery was, for the first time, warmly discussed, both



*pro and con.* Not a few of the members strongly objected to the introduction of that subject into our church organ, upon the ground that such a course would utterly deprive the church, in the slave states, of the paper, as a paper opposing slavery would not be suffered to circulate in those states. Among others who ably replied to these objections, was Rev. John Russel. Some of his remarks on the occasion are recorded. They were given in his own peculiar, blunt style, and were as follows: "The Church of the United Brethren in Christ has faithfully spoken out against this curse of curses, and well done in refusing to admit within her pales slave-holders. She has washed her hands of the pollution of this withering, blighting crime. She is free of this damning contamination. None of the blood of the oppressed is found on her skirts. Thus far she has nobly done her duty, in taking a bold stand against this heaven-daring attempt at framing iniquity into a law—in speaking out at all proper times, and on all proper occasions against the monstrous sin of slavery. God forbid that she should now abandon her noble position so bravely taken, and, hitherto, so manfully maintained. This is no time for



her to change front on this important question, or settle down into cowardly, criminal silence. Let her continue to speak out, both through her ministry and press. Let her cry aloud and spare not. Let her show the people their transgressions, and the American nation its sin in oppressing God's poor; for as certain as God is God and right is right, the Republic will have to come to the church's position on this question, sooner or later. Our position on the subject of slavery is made known wherever we go, at all events; and we may expect that slave-holders will avoid, as far as possible, reading a paper published by an abolition church, even if the slavery question is not discussed in its columns. Therefore, I do not see that the discussion of that important question in the columns of the Telescope is going to diminish, very materially, its circulation." The vote was taken, and carried in the affirmative. Has not the church great reason to thank God for enabling her to take and maintain such a noble position with reference to that giant crime? the more especially when it is remembered that so many branches of the Christian church, strong both in wealth and members, so ingloriously fell before this monster Dagon. God be

praised that the prophecy of Russel has been fulfilled! The Republic has come, although through a Red Sea of blood, to the position of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ on the slavery question; and, while many branches of the Christian church, much stronger in wealth and numbers than that humble body, have found it necessary to change tactics with reference to this giant crime,—at which they so long winked, and for which many of them often apologized, and strove to produce, from the Bible, evidences of its divine origin—God be thanked! she has the gratifying satisfaction of seeing her course in this respect so unmistakably approved of God, and at last assumed by the nation. The reader will pardon this digression.

Bishop Heistand, who presided during this session of conference, had the appearance of a very good man. He was well read, especially in the Scriptures, and a speaker of marked intellectual and emotional powers. At the close of the session, he addressed the conference as if conscious that it was his dying address, which it really was, for he fell asleep in Jesus soon after. Tears flowed down his cheeks while he spoke, and both the manner and mat-

ter of his remarks were well calculated to make a deep impression upon the minds of the body addressed; and this they certainly did. One point upon which he dwelt with much emphasis and apparent anxiety, and against which he warned the conference, was that of giving the Bishops of the church too much power. It seemed as if the aged father saw danger in that direction. During this session Mr. Kessler, having stood his three years' of probation, as required by discipline, was solemnly ordained to the office of Elder in the church, by the imposition of hands. It was a season and ceremony of great solemnity to him.

## CHAPTER V.

CHAMBERSBURG CIRCUIT—GLOOMY PROSPECTS—THE MORMONS—  
CAMP-MEETINGS—GREAT REVIVALS, ESPECIALLY IN CHAMBERS-  
BURG—THE YEAR'S LABOR CROWNED WITH SUCCESS.

The conference which convened at Wormleysburg assigned Mr. Kessler to the Chambersburg Circuit, in company with Rev. John Fohl. This was then a very large field of labor, embracing all the territory now included in Chambersburg Station, Greencastle Circuit, Rocky Spring Circuit, Path Valley Circuit, a part of Mercersburg Circuit, and a part of Big Spring Circuit. This extensive field furnished the two young men with an abundance of labor, into which they engaged with a hearty good will, both being energetic and zealous in the work of their Master. But they soon encountered obstacles sufficiently formidable to dampen their zeal and try their energy. They found vital godliness at a very low ebb on their charge; and to add to their perplexities, the Mormons overrun that section of



country during that summer, and carried away, with their damnable heresies, not a few who had previously been members of the United Brethren Church. How strange it is that there are always some who are ever ready, as soon as some new dogma or ism is proclaimed, even though it have the devil for its father, to fly away from their previous moorings, and set sail under the new banner. So it was with some United Brethren in and around Chambersburg, when Mormonism—a more corrupt faith than which the devil never devised—first made its appearance there. They immediately renounced their former faith, and cast in their lots with the disciples of Joe. Smith; and for a time it looked as if the United Brethren society at Chambersburg would be annihilated. A member of that society, on learning that the conference had sent two *young* men to the Chambersburg Circuit, very self-sufficiently remarked to another, “We can’t rely very much upon our preachers this year; we must count on doing the work principally ourselves.” But, strange to relate, this same man, who considered himself one of the pillars on which the church was to rest during the maladministration of the two inexperienced young preachers,



was one of the first caught in the Mormon snare, and carried away by that cunningly-devised, concubinage scheme of his satanic majesty. Nor was he content to go alone. He took his wife with him, and did all in his power to persuade other United Brethren to follow his example. Verily, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." About this time another official member took offense at something, no one knows what, withdrew from the church, and joined a sister denomination. Altogether, things looked very gloomy at this time, in and around Chambersburg, so far as the prospects of the United Brethren Church were concerned. The congregations were very small; but the preachers continued to preach, pray, and visit, at this as well as at all other points on their charge, and resolved to do their duty and leave the results with God. Soon after Mr. Kessler's first visit to Chambersburg, he, in company with the class-leader, visited the members of the church in the town. As they went from house to house they called at one place where the man of the house was not at home. He was a member of the church, but his wife was not. She received them, and invited them to take seats, not, however, with-

out giving evidences that their presence was not agreeable. The conversation soon turned upon the subject of religion. This seemed to displease her very much, and to all questions she replied in a very haughty, angry manner. She thought ministers were meddling where they had no business, when they were going from house to house, talking to the people and praying with them. If the people desired their services they could send for them, and then it would be time enough for them to come. "True," said Mr. Kessler, "so far as we ourselves are concerned, we have no business to inquire into the condition of your soul. But we have a commission from on high, and that commission makes it our duty to be about our heavenly Father's business; and it is his business to inquire, through us, into the condition of your soul, and warn you to 'flee from the wrath to come.'" He then proposed having a word of prayer with her before leaving. "O," said she, "I do not care whether you pray or not." At this he arose, and turning to her said, "Well, madam, freely we have received, and such as we have we freely give in the name of the Lord Jesus; but if you do not prefer to have us pray with you we shall retire without doing so, but shall not forget you in our private

devotions. Good-by." And so they left her. But, strange as it may seem, this simple circumstance led to her conviction and conversion, and she became a very pious, influential member of the church. The thought of having so rudely rejected the kind instructions and prayers of him who, by his gentle manner, gave real evidence that he was a messenger sent from God to warn her of sin and point her to the Savior, haunted her like a specter; and she found no rest, day nor night, until she had sought and found forgiveness at the hands of a merciful Redeemer.

Toward the close of the summer season it was resolved to have a camp-meeting on the circuit. In attempting this the two young ministers met with considerable opposition; and after a faithful canvass of the entire charge, they secured only twenty tents. There might as easily have been forty, and would have been, but for the disposition there always is upon the part of some to oppose all good enterprises. Before the time arrived, however, for holding this camp-meeting, Mr. Kessler attended one near Hagerstown, in the State of Maryland. This meeting was very largely attended. The multitude present on Sabbath was estimated at seven thousand persons, and the meeting

was a most precious time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The colored people had their tents in the rear of the preachers' stand, and after preaching they would have their prayer-meetings. They mostly had a circle formed around the altar, composed of singers, and as soon as a mourner was converted they would pass the convert out of that circle into another one, near by, formed for the shouters. Their shouts and singing were so very boisterous that the singing of the white congregation was often completely drowned in the echoes and reverberations of the colored people's tumultuous strains.

This meeting resulted in great good. Scores of souls were converted, and saints built up in the holy faith of the gospel.

From this meeting Mr. Kessler went to another, similar in character, near Frederick City, in the same state. Here he met with a number of the ministers of the Virginia Conference, and engaged them to come over to the Chambersburg camp-meeting. The names of those who came are as follows: George A. Guething, William R. Coursey, G. B. Rimel, J. Haney, and J. Markwood. These came directly from the Frederick City camp-meeting to the one that was now to commence near



Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; and with them came a number of the members of the Pennsylvania Conference—all full of faith and the Holy Ghost. Hence, there was a good supply of ministers present, all of whom “had a mind to work;” and the meeting proved a most complete success. Fifty persons were converted before the meeting closed, and a large number powerfully awakened, who soon after gave their hearts to God; and there was scarcely an appointment on the entire charge but was strengthened by that meeting.

About the first of November a protracted meeting was commenced at Rocky Springs. The large Presbyterian meeting-house was obtained in which to hold it. Some of the brethren were opposed to holding the meeting in that house, insisting that it was too large. And as the floor was constructed of bricks instead of boards, it was their opinion that a people in the habit of kneeling in prayer could not worship to advantage where they would be under the necessity of kneeling upon a brick pavement. But, despite the objections, the meeting was held in the house, so kindly offered for that purpose by the Presbyterian brethren, and was a decided success. Persons were stricken down with conviction,



and came forward to the altar to be prayed with and for, by scores. The meeting was continued about a week, and resulted in quite a number of conversions. One night the interest was so great that the meeting was continued until after sunrise of the next day. The sun was shining brightly when Mr. Kessler walked out of the meeting-house across to a brother's house to partake of some breakfast.

About the 10th of November a protracted meeting was commenced in Chambersburg, under what seemed to be rather unfavorable auspices. On Saturday evening the congregation was quite small. After preaching, Mr. Kessler gave an invitation for mourners to come forward, with but little hope that there would be any. To his surprise and joy five soon came forward. The evening next succeeding, there were about twenty-five forward at the altar, a number of whom were converted before the meeting closed that evening. This created an unusual excitement throughout the town, and by Monday evening nearly all the churches commenced revival meetings. The meeting in the United Brethren church was continued for several months, with great success. During the meeting a young lady who was engaged in

a paper-mill, located in the suburbs of the town, became deeply convicted, and one day retired to a private room in the mill to pray. The overseer happened to step in while she was engaged in prayer; and her prayer and tears made such a deep impression upon his mind that he at once became convicted. That evening he attended the Lutheran church, stated his case in a very feeling, penitent manner, and asked the prayers of the church in his behalf. This was the beginning of a good work in that congregation, for as soon as he was converted, Peter-like, he began to strengthen his brethren, by exhorting them to greater diligence, and by praying with and for them. Not unfrequently, during this meeting in Chambersburg, did it happen that about the time the minister in the United Brethren church was done preaching, and in the act of inviting the seekers forward to the altar, persons who had been attending preaching in the other churches, would come in, and without ever stopping to take a seat, would walk directly forward to the altar and kneel down among the mourners and begin to cry for mercy. Not a few were happily converted in that way.

About this time the far-famed Rev. Doctor Nevin issued his noted bull against the Mourners' Bench, and the hymn commencing, "Come ye sinners, poor and needy." But in spite of that notable document the good old hymn is still sung by tens of thousands, and convicted, sin-burdened souls rush to the anxious seat, glad even there to be disburdened of their guilt, and find acceptance through the mercy of God and the love of Jesus.

This year was one of marked success on the Chambersburg Circuit. At nearly every appointment the church membership was increased in numbers, and greatly strengthened spiritually; but most especially in the town of Chambersburg. Upward of four-score souls were added to the church at that point alone. This so much increased the strength of the society at that place, that at the next session of conference Chambersburg was constituted a station.

For this years' services Mr. Kessler and family received as salary one hundred and sixty dollars. In addition to this there was placed in his hands forty dollars surplus, which he paid over to the conference.

## CHAPTER VI.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINE AND FORTY—CHAMBERSBURG CIRCUIT—REVIVALS—CONFERENCE IN BALTIMORE—DAUPHIN CIRCUIT—ORGANIZING CLASSES—FAILURE OF HEALTH.

The conference session of the year 1839 was held at Lebanon, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. Nothing worthy of special note transpired at this session. Mr. Kessler was returned to the Chambersburg Circuit alone, its size having been somewhat diminished, by constituting the Chambersburg appointment a station, and other changes. He betook himself to the duties of his charge with a cheerful heart. His former colleague, Rev. John Fohl, was assigned to the Chambersburg station. At the first quarterly conference held on the circuit that year, it was found that the work to be performed was too great for one man, and Rev. Frederick Gilbert was employed to assist Mr. Kessler. A very large camp-meeting was held on the circuit in the month of August, and a great number of persons were converted at



it. At many other points there were very precious revivals.

Toward the close of this year, Mr. Kessler experienced some very precious seasons of personal spiritual enjoyment. It was his custom, from the time he first commenced to preach, to read a chapter or two in the Bible every evening, just before retiring, and spend some time in meditating upon it. If his room was too cold to admit of sitting up to read, he would retire, take his Bible in his hand, set the candle upon his chest, and in that way spend sometimes an hour or more in reading. At that time, the fields of labor were so large that, by the time the minister filled all his appointments, and did the required amount of visiting, there was but little time left for reading and mental culture. Hence, he found it necessary to make the best improvement possible of his nights.

One night, after retiring, he was lying in the bed, in the above described position—a distance from home—reading the sixth chapter of Luke. When he came to the place where it is related of the Savior that he continued all night in prayer, his mind was deeply affected. He forgot almost every thing except prayer.

The next morning he arose from his bed, praying, most seriously impressed. He continued in that state of mind for several weeks. Finally the time came for him to visit his family. He was met at his door with the accustomed cheerful greeting. He tried to smile, and appear cheerful, but in vain. His companion discovered, in his singular manner, evidences that all was not well. She inquired the cause of his apparent gloom. He gave her no answer, but took a seat near the stove. The inmates of the house withdrew to another room, inquiring, each of the other, with much anxiety, the cause of his strange conduct, and sad countenance, remarking that he had never appeared so before. Just then they were startled by his piercing shouts of glory to God. The cloud had scattered, and God had revealed himself in a most unmistakable manner. Never before had he received so powerful a blessing. Both body and soul were most sensibly affected by it. His heart had been earnestly engaged in prayer from the night above referred to, up to that hour, and at last the blessing came. It was like the food given to Elijah by the Lord; for he felt the strengthening influences of that blessing more than forty

days. For a long time after, when he prayed, it seemed as if he were conversing with a very familiar friend, face to face.

One day, while on his way to a distant appointment, and as he was passing a large farm-house, a young man called after him. He faced about, rode up to the gate, and inquired what he wished. The young man's eyes were bathed in tears, and he said: "You are a preacher, are you not?" "I am," said Mr. Kessler. "Well," said he, "please come in; for my sister is about dying, and she wishes some one to pray with her." He dismounted, and entered the house. He found the young lady almost in the agonies of death, but very sensible. Her parents, brothers, and sisters were standing around her bed weeping. She fixed her eyes on Mr. Kessler as soon as he entered, and exclaimed, "I know you, for I saw you at the camp-meeting; please pray for me." He prayed with her, and did all he could to enable her to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. She was formerly a young lady of a very worldly disposition, much given to the vanities of dress. She had been awakened months before, but had resisted the strivings of the Spirit. Now she greatly deplored her former

vanity and impenitence. He continued for a short time to sing with, pray for, and exhort her. At last her faith took hold of the Redeemer, and she was made happy in a Savior's love. She shouted glory to God in the highest, and exhorted all her friends to commence at once to seek God in the pardon of their sins. Mr. Kessler was loth to quit the place; but finally bade the young lady an affectionate farewell. She departed from the world soon after, in great peace; and in a short time every member of that family was happily converted to God.

During this year, Mr. Kessler took up an appointment in a village where there was no church, and seldom any preaching. The people were very wicked, and scarcely more than half civilized. The kind brother who lodged the preacher, was quite fearful of the consequences; for there had been some terrible threatenings as to what would be done, if meetings were kept up there. The first time he went there to preach, he was informed of the threats that had been made, and the danger of holding meetings in the place. He replied, "When I go to preach, I go in the fear and strength of Jehovah; and, when in the line of



my duty, I do not fear as many wicked men as could stand in a ten-acre field." When the hour came for preaching he started for the school-house, in which the meeting was to be held, in company with the good brother with whom he had stopped. It was an evening appointment; and they found the house crowded with people inside, and a large number gathered around the outside, keeping up considerable confusion. The meeting commenced with singing and prayer. During the first prayer a young lady present, was so deeply convicted that she began to cry aloud for mercy. At this her friends became greatly alarmed, and hurried her off home. The next morning she continued in deep distress, and they took her a distance of fifteen miles, to where their minister resided, so that he could quiet her fears. But all this did no good. She returned as she went, with a broken heart; nor did her tears cease to flow, or her cries for mercy cease to ascend, until God, for Christ's sake, spoke peace to her soul.

In four weeks Mr. Kessler returned to that place, to preach the second time; and the congregation was even larger than the first time. This time, during preaching, a young lady fell

down and began to cry for mercy. Her friends soon hurried her out of the house. Whether she was afterward converted or not, he did not learn, but the circumstances had a marked effect on the people. They feared the Lord greatly, and many of them were converted to God during that year. Mr. Kessler withheld the names of place and persons, because many of the people connected with the circumstances were still living when he wrote, and he deemed that giving to them publicity might prove an occasion of needless offense.

This conference year had been to him one of much hard labor, and was closing with his health much impaired. For his services he received one hundred and fifty dollars.

The conference session of 1840 convened in Otterbein Chapel, in the city of Baltimore. This place being quite on the south-eastern border of the conference district, and many miles distant from most of the fields of labor included in the conference, and the facilities for travel being not so abundant as now, but few railroads having yet been built, the session was but slimly attended. Many of the ministers in charge of fields of labor failed to be present, but sent up their reports by mail, and

but few of the local members were present. The session, however, was a most pleasant and profitable one. Never will the kindness and hospitality of the brethren, as manifested in the cordial reception and sumptuous entertainment given to the conference, be forgotten by those who constituted that body. The Otterbein Chapel was, at that time, under the pastoral care of Rev. John Russel, and was in a most flourishing condition. A most interesting revival was in progress, and the altar was crowded with penitents every evening during the session. One evening a minister from the rural districts preached, his discourse being delivered with much life and energy. In closing, he dwelt on the privilege then afforded the people of coming forward to the altar and laying down their sins, which, if clung to, would finally lead them to eternal death, and taking up in their stead the cross, which, if patiently borne through life, would bring to the head of the bearer a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away. While he was thus discoursing, and before he had given an invitation for any wishing to make such an exchange to come forward, a score or more rose in the congregation, and rushed to the altar. This greatly as-

tonished him, as well as others. His sermon was cut off short, and preaching gave way to singing and prayer in the altar. The readiness with which the laity entered into the spirit and work of the meeting, evinced that the society was in a most healthy condition, spiritually. After a pleasant and profitable session, the conference closed, having assigned Mr. Kessler to Dauphin Circuit, a large field of labor lying in Dauphin County, embracing Harrisburg.

In that place there were quite a number of persons belonging to the United Brethren Church; but up to that time they owned no house in which to hold public worship. About the time Mr. Kessler came to the charge, they purchased a commodious church edifice, in which he preached at stated times. Up to this time the work of organizing the members of the church at the different appointments into classes had been much neglected. On this charge, where there was a membership of at least two hundred, he found but two regularly-organized classes; and as he visited point after point he began and continued the then difficult work of organizing classes, and having leaders and stewards elected. This could have



been all effected with comparatively little labor, but for the opposition upon the part of many of the members to such a course. Not being schooled in that way, many of them opposed it bitterly as soon as it was proposed, even before they were fully acquainted with the nature of the step intended. The fear prevailed that it was some relic of high-churchism that was about to be imposed upon them. This made it necessary for him to move very cautiously in this matter, or the arrangement, which was degreat injury to the society. In each case he signed to accomplish good, might result in first consulted the most reliable and influential members, explained to them the necessity of the step, and, having secured their consent and co-operation, he would propose the measure to the members *en masse*. At Neidig's church he organized a class of fifty or sixty members; and although the measure was much opposed when first mentioned, yet the members, finally, seeing the practicability of such a step, took hold with a hearty good will. Regular class- and prayer-meetings were held, (a thing uncommon heretofore,) and the result was, a most precious revival, and the erection of the United Brethren house of worship in Highspire.

At another point where he organized a class, on a certain woman being informed that her husband was elected leader, she wept as if her heart would break, so little did she comprehend the nature of the office of class-leader.

But Mr. Kessler had no more than become sufficiently acquainted with his charge, so as to go to work understandingly, when his failing health compelled him to resign the circuit, a necessity which he greatly deplored, and one of much disadvantage to himself, and detriment to the circuit. For the time he served the circuit, which was about four months, it paid him nothing; but the conference afterward compensated him in part by making him an appropriation of fifty dollars. From the time he resigned until the spring of 1841, he occupied himself mostly in endeavoring to improve his mind. He read a number of books and gave some attention to the study of English grammar, for up to this time he knew nothing of that important science. Occasionally he attempted to perform manual labor, but the impaired condition of his physical energies rendered all such attempts almost futile.

## CHAPTER VII.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY ONE—LOCATED—FARMING—  
CALLS TO PREACH—REVIVALS—BAPTIZING CHILDREN—SEEDING  
—FUNERALS—GREAT REVIVALS, AT WHICH ONE HUNDRED  
AND FIFTY ARE CONVERTED.

The conference session of 1841 was held at Mount Joy, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Here Mr. Kessler, on account of impaired health, was granted, at his own request, the privilege of sustaining, for an indefinite length of time, a local relation to the conference. He settled down on a little farm of his own, situated about four miles east of Chambersburg, with a view to engage in agricultural pursuits, hoping thereby to recover his health, and provide for himself and family. Being physically very much reduced, and his stomach being in such an unhealthy condition as not to relish or digest such food as possessed the more nourishing qualities, he was but poorly suited to the laborious exercises of a farmer's life. In attempting to plow, he soon found a demand for much more muscular force and greater powers of endurance than he could command.

The ground was rough, the team fractious, and by the time a furrow of a few rods in length was drawn, he found it necessary to take a seat, that he might recover his breath. In this way he worked along for weeks, and his strength began gradually to increase.

It might be proper here to state that Mr. Kessler's sickness was dyspepsia in its most malignant form. This was, no doubt, brought upon him by excessive labor and exposure, and irregular and imprudent dieting.

The injurious custom of continuing the evening meetings during revivals until twelve or one o'clock, in houses from which every particle of fresh air was carefully excluded, and then after closing the meeting, and before retiring for sleep, eating a hearty meal of cakes, pies, ham, and sausage, at such an unnatural and importune hour, had doubtless much to do with deranging his digestive organs, and through them impairing his entire physical structure. Had he seen to it that the meeting-houses were well ventilated during revival exercises, and rigidly abstained from partaking of refreshments at midnight hours—he most certainly having the advantage of the fresh air and horseback exercises that traveling



his circuits afforded him—would never have become a dyspeptic. How long will the abominable practice of setting a piece, cooking a meal and so on, after the night meeting has closed, be persisted in? Let the good sisters who desire to manifest their kindness toward their pastor by setting out their pies, cakes, cold ham, and sweetmeats at such hours, and urging him to eat, eat, eat, know that instead of conferring a favor upon him they are striking a death blow at the very foundation of his health and usefulness.

Having located, and being mostly engaged on his little farm, the reader might suppose that Mr. Kessler found no time and no occasion for the employment of his ministerial abilities. But such was not the case. Many times was he requested to visit remote places and preach to the people. During the summer he took up three appointments, where he preached regularly throughout the year. They were situated in such places as were not visited by ministers regularly in the work; one being in the neighborhood where he resided and the other two about three miles distant, in opposite directions. He also held prayer-meetings regularly in his neighbors' houses, until the fall

season. Then he held a series of meetings in the school-house of their district, which resulted in a most precious revival. Many members of the Lutheran Church resided in the neighborhood; and they heartily co-operated with him in these meetings. The best of Christian feeling prevailed. Many souls were happily converted, and among them some who were previously of the most profane and heaven-daring character. From his being on such intimate terms with members of the Lutheran Church, and their hearty co-operation with him during the revival, a report originated to the effect that he had united with that branch of the Christian church; a report which was without the least foundation in fact.

This revival produced a very serious impression throughout the entire community. Persons who previously manifested nothing like seriousness, and lived utterly regardless of God and eternity, became much concerned respecting their spiritual welfare. One day he was sent for, to come and baptize a child. In his own mind he had always been opposed to infant baptism, and told the messenger to return, and tell the man for him that his child was safe through the merits of Christ, without

being baptized, at least until it was old enough to know good and evil. This, however, did not satisfy the parents of the child; consequently the father came himself, and urged Mr. Kessler to go with him and administer the ordinance. In vain he attempted to persuade him that it was not necessary. He only urged him the more strongly, assuring him that, should the child die, not having received the ordinance, the mother would become insane. Finally he consented to comply with the earnest request of the father—who by the way was an unconverted man; nor was the mother converted—satisfied that the performing of the ceremony on the child would do it no harm, and having a faint hope that God in his mercy might overrule the circumstance so as to bring about the conversion of the parents. Accordingly he baptized the child, at the same time most solemnly urging upon the parents their duty to bring up that child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and their inability to do so unless they first experienced a change of heart. To the joy of many, and especially Mr. Kessler, the father and mother were both happily converted to God not many weeks after their child was baptized.

Shortly after this, as Mr. Kessler was on his way home from preaching one Sabbath evening, and passing a house, a man came running out to meet him. Tears were streaming from his eyes, and he thus addressed him: "O, sir! my little boy three years old is just at the point of death, and is not baptized! Will you please come in and baptize him ere he die?" "What if he is not baptized?" said Mr. Kessler. "He is safe through the blood of Jesus, dying in his infancy, without being baptized." But the man would listen to nothing of the kind. He only urged Mr. Kessler in such a distressed, piteous manner to come in and baptize his child ere he die, that he at once yielded to his entreaties and went. But the strangest feature in the whole circumstance is in the fact that this man, his wife and his parents, were all strict members of the Roman Catholic Church. When Mr. Kessler entered the room in which the sick child lay, he found the man's father and mother, his wife, and a few friends gathered around the bed. The child was in great agony, and seemed to be on the very verge of eternity. He called for water, baptized it, offered a prayer, gave a few words of warning and exhortation to those present, and withdrew,



leaving the parents and friends in great distress of mind. In a few days after, much to his surprise, he learned that the child was recovering.

The season arrived when he, as a farmer, should be preparing the ground in which he purposed sowing fall wheat. He had a lot which he had broken up, but before seeding it the ground should be stirred. How to accomplish this he hardly knew, for he had but one horse, his farm being too small to afford more; and to stir his fallow ground with but one horse seemed almost impossible. But what could he do? The time when the work should be done was at hand. To delay was to render his chance for a crop uncertain. The farmers were all very busy, so that to borrow a horse just then seemed to be quite impossible. He determined to attempt the work with but one horse, and did; but the draught was so heavy that to drag the plow through, the animal had to go almost at a trot, stopping every few rods to breathe. As he was working along in this way, two men came riding down the road; and when opposite him they stopped and one called to him. He approached them, and soon discovered that the one who called him was a man who resided near by, and had at one

time become very angry with him on account of his course religiously. As soon as he had come within speaking distance this man exclaimed as follows: "Mr. Kessler, that is too bad. It is murder to man and beast. Go directly up to my stable, and there you will find a horse, harnessed. Take him, and keep him till you have finished your seeding. It shall cost you nothing." This unexpected kindness, coming from the source it did, filled his heart with joy and gratitude, both to God and his kind benefactor.

During the winter of this year much of his time was spent in assisting in revival meetings. Sometimes he went as far as the borough of York, Pennsylvania, sometimes to Littlestown, willingly submitting to hardships and labors, such as he was able to endure, that the word of God might run and be glorified, and that sinners might be converted.

The conference session of 1842 convened in Powell's Valley, Dauphin County, Pa.; but Mr. Kessler did not attend, as he did not feel able to take a charge. This year he was so frequently called upon to officiate in a clerical capacity, and so much of his time was occupied in this way, that his farming interests

were, necessarily, much neglected. Often persons came as much as twenty miles for him to attend funerals; and in all such cases, while his complying with their requests involved expenses of toll, wear and tear of clothes, horse and equipments, and a loss of two or three days of precious time, never had one of those—to serve whom he incurred all these expenses, that their friends might receive Christian burial—the generosity, forethought, or manliness to offer a single penny in return. Does not such conduct speak volumes? How vividly and unmistakably it shows up the narrow-hearted, close-fisted nature of those who are guilty of such conduct. Is there any good reason why a man, because he is a minister, should be expected to spend his time and and wear out his clothes, horse and buggy, attending and officiating at funerals, without a reasonable compensation? True, the United Brethren Discipline says that no charge shall be made; but it does *not* say that nothing shall be given for such services. It does not say that a charge shall be made for solemnizing the marriage ceremony; but who thinks of getting married without giving the officiating pastor a handsome present? Let those who by feasting

sumptuously all who attend the funeral, intending thereby, to manifest the height of their esteem and depth of their love for the deceased, think for a moment how very appropriately and emphatically they could manifest much love and esteem by placing in the hands of the officiating clergyman a handsome reward for his services. Such a manifestation of respect for the deceased would certainly be appreciated by every sensible person, and most especially by the care-worn, penniless pastor.

Mr. Kessler passed the summer of 1842 farming, preaching, attending funerals, officiating at weddings, and holding prayer-meetings. As the winter set in, requests came from all directions for him to assist his ministerial brethren in conducting revival-meetings. One day he received three letters, each from a different minister, all requesting and urging him very strongly to come to their assistance. They proposed holding meetings, and they wished him to be present; but each of the three meetings was to commence on the same day. Here was a dilemma. To which should he go? Where could he be the most useful? He could not decide. The day came when he should start; but where should he go? He made



ready; saddled his horse, but still could not decide. He put up his horse, laid off his overcoat, and resolved to wait until the next day. It came, and away he went. But when he arrived at the meeting and saw so many ministers present, he felt grieved, for his conviction was that he had come to the wrong meeting. The meeting was continued over Sabbath, without any special interest being awakened, and on Monday all the ministers left, except S. Dresback and Mr. Kessler. They continued the meeting till Wednesday evening, when five mourners came to the altar. On Thursday morning Mr. Dresback left, and Mr. Kessler remained to continue the meeting alone. For three months he kept up the meeting; and during that time over two hundred penitents were forward at the altar, of whom about one hundred and fifty were soundly converted to God. Most of this number were heads of families; and by the time the meeting closed, but few unconverted persons remained in the neighborhood. This was one of the most powerful as well as remarkable revivals ever witnessed. The Lord truly was there, to kill and to make alive. For several weeks the meeting was continued, day and night; and

during the day-meetings the altar was crowded with mourners. One Sabbath evening eleven penitents were blessed, all about the same time.

This meeting differed from most of the same kind in one important particular, which it is deemed proper to mention. Instead of being attended with the noise and excitement usual on such occasions, it was remarkably quiet and orderly. The people of God "*had a mind to work*" instead of *play*. They aimed higher than their own personal enjoyment. They were deeply anxious to see sinners converted. For *this* they labored and prayed. They felt, as really was the case, that "the harvest truly was great and the laborers few," and hence the greater necessity of devotedness upon their part. When the meeting commenced there were only six or eight persons who could be relied upon to labor in the altar. These, while they were not boisterous, were truly devoted to the work before them. While they seldom shouted or gave any outward physical manifestation of excessive joy, they did not fail to weep with those who wept, and rejoice with those who rejoiced; and even then their rejoic-

ing was always, as it should be, with moderation.

A rather intelligent young man, who professed to be an infidel, was a regular attendant at the meeting from the time it commenced. At first he listened to the preaching, and gazed upon the exercises in the altar with apparently profound interest, mingled with scorn and contempt. With him the Bible was a fable, Jesus Christ an impostor, and death an eternal sleep. In his eyes sorrow for sin was an evidence of weakness, forgiveness of sin a delusion, zealousness in urging sinners to repent fanaticism, and rejoicing on account of sins forgiven animal excitement. In short, all the exercises of the sanctuary were, in his estimation, wholly unfit for an *intelligent* man to engage in. He was never better satisfied than when he could draw some one into an argument on the subject of religion who was in no way qualified to defend the religion of the Bible against the assaults of the skeptic. The weakness of his opponent on such occasions was always by him transformed into a weakness of the cause the man was trying to defend, and never appeared to him, as it really was, only the weakness of the man who made the defense. Over such vic-

tories he chuckled with peculiar self-gratification. One evening Mr. Kessler met him, and the conversation soon turned upon the great revival then in progress at that place. He did not stop, as would others, to answer the young man's objections, but spoke feelingly of the love of Jesus and the inexpressible joy imparted to the soul when it does taste and see that the Lord is good. When the young man would interpose objections, Mr. Kessler would only say, "we do not ask you to take our word, only test the matter for yourself, by doing all you can to give your heart to God." This led him to reflect. He thought that the request was a very reasonable one, and said in his own mind, "if the Bible is true, it is *awfully* true, and as there is a possibility that it *is* true, would not I act very foolishly ever to refuse to test a matter of so much importance to myself? These people seem to be rational; they seem to have common sense, and certainly when they say, 'do not take our word, but test the matter for yourself,' their proposition is such a reasonable one that no reasonable man can object to it. I *will* test the matter for myself." And strange to relate, the next evening the young infidel was among the penitents, crying for



mercy, his heart all broken up with a consciousness of guilt; and ere the meeting closed that night he was made happy in a Savior's love. During the continuance of the meeting he was a very active laborer in the altar. One evening he approached Mr. Kessler and said, "I now for myself have realized that there is a divine reality in the religion of Jesus Christ. God has powerfully revealed himself unto me as a sin-pardoning God." He became a very useful, consistent Christian, and exerted a powerful influence for good. His sister, a young lady of mind and refinement, was converted about the same time he was, and remained an ornament to the church while she lived.

It was Mr. Kessler's custom during the meeting to canvass the congregation and speak personally to every one present on the subject of religion. Frequently while thus engaged, he would meet with persons who would promise that on the next evening they would go forward and seek religion. Such he would make the subjects of prayer during the following day, and as soon as preaching was over the next evening, he

would find his way to them in the congregation, and seldom failed to bring them out. During this meeting he preached upward of forty sermons in succession, on every evening for more than forty evenings, and labored much in the altar; but with all this he retained his usual health, nor had he been much worn down when the meeting closed.

One young man of respectable parents came forward to the altar, about the middle of the meeting, apparently as deeply distressed on account of sin, and as sincere in desiring to make his peace with God, as any one who approached the altar during the meeting. But he labored night after night, for weeks together; and all was done to instruct and encourage him that could be done by those present, yet the meeting closed and he was not converted. His case excited an unusual degree of interest; and upon inquiry being made respecting his habits and employment, it was found that all the day long he stood behind a bar, selling ardent spirits, poisoning men's bodies, ruining their souls, and beggaring women and children. This business he continued to follow; and who will doubt but for it he, as well as others, could have experienced the forgiveness of his sins. "Be

not deceived; God is not mocked." They who would obtain his blessing must break off their sins by righteousness, and give him an *undivided* heart. Then he will be found of them. But not while by their lives, and doings for the sake of the wealth that perishes, they set a snare to entrap their fellows, and play the part of herdsman for the devil, can they obtain the blessing.

The meeting closed, and Mr. Kessler returned home full of zeal and the Holy Ghost. Never had he enjoyed himself better; never had he labored with such ease and success. And most deeply was the conviction fixed in his mind that he was directed by the Holy Spirit to that place, at that time.

Shout aloud the joyful anthem,  
Swell the news from pole to pole;  
Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer,  
Offers life to every soul.

## CHAPTER VIII.

RE-ENTERS THE ITINERANCY—REASONS FOR REGRETTING THAT STEP—HERSHEY'S STATION—REVIVALS—FUNERALS—AN AWFUL DEATH—FOLLY OF NEGLECTING TO GIVE THE HEART TO GOD, &c., &c.

In the spring of 1843 the Pennsylvania Conference convened in Fetterhoff Chapel, Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Mr. Kessler having partly recovered his health attended this session, and, after much solicitation upon the part of his ministerial brethren, consented to take a field of labor. This, however, he much regretted in after years; not that he disliked the labors incident to an active itinerant's life, but because he became heartily weary of those many unpleasantnesses which so often associate themselves with the minister's life, and which are ever the offspring of penuriousness and fault-finding upon the part of church-members. He loved to preach. He loved to labor to extend and build up the Redeemer's kingdom, and never felt so completely satisfied as when engaged in holding



revival meetings. But he was naturally independent, and when a whole year's earnest effort was rewarded, by the people among whom he labored, with the mere pittance of one hundred, or one hundred and fifty dollars, it would cause his self-reliant spirit to revolt at the thought of laboring for a people so utterly incapable of appreciating his services. He could submit to be reduced to beggary himself, that the gospel might be preached to the *poor*; but his conscience revolted at the thought that his family must be pinched by the extremest poverty, because he spent his time in preaching the gospel to members of the church—some of whom made the loudest profession of having attained to true piety—who were filled with riches, and amassing large fortunes, and who were too narrow-hearted to pay a liberal salary to their pastor. And the thought that spending the prime of his life in laboring from year to year for a bare living, must necessarily bring him down to old age, should he live to become old, with no means in store on which to rely, was a source of constant annoyance. He could see no good reason why a wealthy and prosperous membership should not *willingly* and *promptly* pay their preacher a sum not merely sufficient

to subsist himself and family upon, but to enable him annually to lay up in store a little against sickness and old age. He did not claim to be a thorough logician; but it seemed clear to his mind that the same promises from which the conclusion was drawn that it was right, in the sight of God, for the lay members of the church, farmers, merchants, and mechanics, to lay up in store against old age and sickness—aye, amass fortunes; become independently rich—would admit of the conclusion that it was right for the faithful minister of the gospel to gather at least a little each year against such an emergency, and that without doing any violence to the rules of logic and common sense. And the more especially had this conviction been deepened, by a practical demonstration of the fact that wealthy church-members, residing near by their pastor, were very apt to forget him altogether, should he be confined to his couch by sickness. The thought that he *might* be in want seldom, if ever, troubled them. Thank God, there are many noble, whole-souled members in the United Brethren Church to whom these remarks do not apply, and for whom they are not intended. But should they fall under the eye

of some wealthy preacher-starving member, let him know that they are intended for him, and are accompanied by the earnest prayer that they may soften his heart and reform the men who indirectly rob God by robbing his faithful ministers.

During the time he was located, Mr. Kessler enjoyed himself much. Time passed smoothly and rapidly. The active, laborious life of a farmer afforded him many a pleasure during the day, and peaceful, sound slumber at night. The prompt returns of the soil, in response to his toil, dispelled all fears of beggary from his fireside. True, there was ever a burning desire in his heart to be more actively engaged in the vineyard of the Lord; but then there was such a positive satisfaction in gathering, directly from the bosom of mother earth a comfortable subsistence, free from the many storms and heart-aches heaped upon the minister by parsimonious, fault-finding (the stingy are always the fault-finders) members, that he very reluctantly yielded to the entreaties of his brethren, forsook the plow, and again entered the itinerant ranks. He could have done so most cheerfully had he had any grounds for hope that his future would not be one

of penury and want. But he could only judge of the future by the past; hence his gloomy forebodings. Nevertheless, when he had decided to accept work of the conference, he at once determined to throw every power of his ardent nature into the work, for he never did things by halves. He was now assigned to Hershey Station, in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. This was a new station, set apart from the Carlisle Circuit at this conference session, and was composed of one appointment. In addition to preaching regularly at this place during the year, he explored much of the adjoining territory, took up six or eight appointments, held revival meetings at some of them, and organized several good societies. At some of these places there have since been meeting-houses erected, which by their size and neatness speak favorably of the liberality and taste of the brethren by whom they were built. By the time the year's labors closed the membership on the charge was much increased and the station enlarged into a small circuit. The footing up of his accounts and final settlement with the stewards showed that he received, for himself and family, the round sum of one hundred and fifty dollars, for his



year's labors. Surely he was at no loss to know where to invest his money; but how to supply food and clothing enough upon which he and those dependent upon him could subsist, caused him many a sleepless night.

The conference session of 1844 convened in Shopp's church, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. The business was transacted with dispatch and general harmony, nothing worthy of special notice being brought before the session. Mr. Kessler was returned to Hershey Station for another year, and resumed his labors with his usual energy and self-consecration. Early in the year he was called upon to officiate at a very large funeral. Most of the relatives of the deceased were unconverted. In the funeral sermon he took special care to warn the impenitent of the importance of preparing immediately for death, it being his conviction that funeral sermons are only proper as far as they can be made to benefit the living, and stimulate them to an earnest, active preparation for the solemn summons. The sermon produced a deep impression; and many of the unconverted who were then and there so earnestly and faithfully warned, gave their hearts to God during the year, and became

active, consistent members of the church. One day while engaged in making pastoral calls he was suddenly overtaken by a man, seemingly in great haste, who requested him to go with him a distance of nine miles to see a man who was supposed to be at the point of death. He at once obeyed the request, and in as short a time as possible made his way to the bed side of the afflicted man. He was apparently very near death. Mr. Kessler immediately commenced a series of inquiries, that he might ascertain the condition of his mind, and found him deeply penitent. He then spent some time in speaking to him of man's lost condition by nature, and of the great willingness and ability of Jesus to save all who acknowledge their sins and repent of them, and through faith accept of him as their Savior. This done, he kneeled by his bed side and offered up a fervent prayer. Having risen from prayer, he sung the well-known hymn commencing:

"How happy every child of grace,  
Who knows his sins forgiven!"

While singing the third stanza the sick man received a most powerful blessing. With it his strength, hitherto almost exhausted, seemed to return, and he praised God with a loud

voice. Strange as it may seem, he commenced to recover from that very hour, and in a few weeks fully regained his health. The only thing to be regretted, connected with this circumstance, is the fact that this man, now seemingly brought back from the very verge of the grave in such a superhuman manner, was no sooner fully restored to his former health than instead of continuing faithful in the service of the God who so mercifully heard and blessed him while in such deep distress; instead of faithfully paying the vows made under such solemn circumstances, soon became absorbed in worldly interests, forsook the sanctuary of God, and when last heard from was engaged in that most loathsome, wicked, and soul-damning of all pursuits—selling intoxicating liquors. Better that he had not vowed, than having vowed failed to perform. Better that he had never “tasted of the good word of life and of the powers of the world to come,” than having tasted, to “crucify to himself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” After all, is not his case only one of many that stand as evidence against the sincerity of sick- and death-bed repentance?

Shortly after this circumstance occurred, a

very precious revival commenced at Hershey's church, which continued for several weeks, and resulted in quite a number of conversions. During the continuance of this meeting Mr. Kessler, as was his custom on such occasions, sought and obtained personal interviews with many unconverted persons, and urged them to seek the forgiveness of their sins. One evening while canvassing the congregation on a mission of this kind, he obtained from a young man and his wife a promise that they would both present themselves at the altar, as seekers, the next evening. The evening came, and they were in their seats in the church; but when the invitation for seekers to come forward was given, neither of them came. The meeting closed for the evening; and the young lady went home weeping bitterly, and charging her husband with being the cause of her not keeping her promise, positively asserting that she would have gone to the altar had he only led the way. Alas! that she did not resolve to act for herself in this important matter, regardless of what her husband might do or say. The seeking of the salvation of the soul is too weighty a matter, and of too much importance, to be swerved from by any thing that *another*



may say or do. And time is too short and life too uncertain for any one to allow himself or herself to be induced to postpone their return to God, when once awakened. A moment's delay may ruin the soul forever, even though that delay may be caused by the indifference or obstinacy of another. "Every one shall give an account, *for himself*, to God." The husband's refusing to act, and thereby keeping back the wife, will not excuse her; nor will the wife's indifference or opposition justify the husband in deferring his return to God. "Be not deceived; God *is not* mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And in the catalogue of crime no sin stands higher than a deliberate refusal to give the heart to God *at once*, after that heart has been made to feel its need of a Savior. Nor should the conduct of another, though it be a husband, be allowed to have any weight toward preventing the individual from making a full surrender to God.

Well would it have been for this young lady had she not been governed on this occasion by the conduct of her husband. Perhaps he was waiting for her to go first. Be this as it may, she went home without having publicly endeav-

ored to give her heart to God. The next morning she arose, kindled a fire upon the hearth, and commenced to prepare breakfast. While thus engaged she was suddenly taken with a spasm and fell in such close proximity to the fire that her clothes ignited; and when her husband entered she was found lying before the fire, her clothing all consumed and her body burned to a crisp. Although thus horribly burned, life was not extinct, nor was she unconscious. She requested that Mr. Kessler be sent for immediately. The neighbors gathered in, and among them Mr. Kessler made his appearance. But what a sight! As the eye gazed upon the mass of roasted flesh, and the mind faintly grasped an idea of the sufferings the unfortunate one must be enduring, the heart sickened, and turned fainting away. Poor sufferer! How she lamented that she had not gone to the mourner's bench the evening previous. All was done that could be done to direct her to a merciful and forgiving Savior; but after lingering a few hours in such agony of both mind and body as it is the lot of but few to experience on earth, she died seemingly without hope. Her lamentations were such as made the stoutest heart ache, and brought tears

from eyes that were seldom wont to weep. And the theme of her lamentations was the unfortunate mistake she had made in deferring her return to God until it was, as she believed, *too late*. The question may arise in the mind of the reader—"Could she not even then have repented and been saved?" This is not denied. Christ is able to save, *to the uttermost*, all who come to him, even the chief of sinners. But how could one suffering such bodily torture as hers, from the time she was burned until death came to her relief, sufficiently collect her mind so as to take hold of Christ by a living, saving faith? How could one in her condition do in a few moments a work for the accomplishing of which a life-time is not too long, and that with the sin of having previously refused to give her heart to God, when she felt it her duty to do so staring her in the face? Her funeral was largely attended; and her sudden and horrible death made a deep impression upon the entire community. Her husband, almost frantic with grief and self-reproaches, found his way to the altar the evening after her funeral, where he labored for several evenings with great earnestness, and was finally converted. The meeting continued for a number of weeks;

and scores of souls were brought out of the bondage of sin into the liberty of God's dear children. Many were added to the church during this meeting who have since emigrated to the western states, and have carried with them the soul-warning love of Jesus, the joy-imparting influences of which they first experienced at Hershey Station. By removals, deaths, and other means and influences, the society at that place became weak. Years after Mr. Kessler had left, and through mismanagement and for the want of a few hundred dollars to cancel a debt, the meeting-house was sold; and the society, built up and watched over by him with so much care and solicitude, was left without a house in which to worship. This was a source of much sorrow to him, for it was his deliberate conviction that but for the worldly-mindedness of wealthy men who were connected with the church, the property might have been saved to it.

During this year Mr. Kessler was elected a delegate to General Conference, which was to convene in May, 1845, but did not attend, being prevented by a severe spell of sickness, of which more will be said in the following chapter. His second year's labors at Hershey Station now



drew to a close, and the sums paid him as salary for the year's services amounted to one hundred and eighty dollars, all told.

The care-worn pastor now departs;  
His little flock he leaves;  
Commits them to the Father's care,  
He'll guard his precious sheaves.

He turns his face to other fields,  
Though loth to quit *this* place;  
To Providence, in faith he yields,  
While tears bedew his face.

The joys, the sorrows, hopes and fears,  
That with this flock he's shared,  
Have so endeared them to his heart,—  
How can he leave them now?

"Farewell," he sobs, "I you commit  
To Christ's—the Shepherd's—care;  
Obey His voice—we'll meet above,  
And there's no parting there."

"The storms of life will soon be o'er;  
Its tears and farewells cease;  
And saints shall dwell forevermore  
With Christ, in perfect peace."

His exhortation at an end,  
Like Paul, he kneels in prayer,  
Then takes his leave. They've lost a friend;  
His heart still lingers there.

And while in other parts he roams,  
Beset by toil and care,  
To him sweet recollections come,  
Of joys experienced there.

## CHAPTER IX.

MINISTERIAL ATTIRE — JOHN LIGHT — HIGHSPIRE CIRCUIT — SICKNESS — SHOPP'S STATION — THE EVIL OF CHURCH MEMBERS ATTEMPTING TO DICTATE TO AND CONTROL THEIR PASTOR — POWERFUL REVIVALS.

The session of the Pennsylvania Conference, for the year 1845, was held in Highspire, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania. Bishop Kumler presided at this session—a man of great natural abilities as a minister of the gospel; rather eccentric in his manner, but a good presiding officer and Christian man nevertheless. The usual business was transacted; and some *unusual* matters were brought before the conference, in the way of offering some resolutions, which excited debate and produced considerable sensation. One of these resolutions was to the effect that all members of conference be required to wear shad-belly coats, and permitted to wear none other. Another was, that all members of conference be required to wear their hair straight down over the forehead, and not allowed to comb it up or to the side. After

those whose fanaticism on the dress and hair question had prompted them to offer these resolutions were thoroughly riddled by their opponents, the resolutions were voted down, much to the honor of that body.

Among those who opposed them, there were none who did so more ably and effectively than Rev. John Light. He argued clearly that there was nothing in the word of God that would justify a body of ministers in conforming strictly to a peculiar cut of the coat or of the hair. He contended that every Christian man ought to have common sense enough to know for himself how to dress; and that the religion of Jesus Christ in the heart was intended, among other things, to prevent men from running into worldly excess in dress, as well as in other matters; and that the man who could not regulate himself in his attire so as to present a decent and Christian-like appearance, without being constrained thereto by an ecclesiastical edict, gave evidence that he was not sound either in head or heart. If the fault was in the head, if common sense was wanting, he was not fit to be a minister, and his license should be demanded. If the fault was in the heart, then the proper place to begin to whittle

was at the heart and not at the coat or hair. Get the heart right, and let it be filled with the Holy Ghost; regulate the man in his dress and in every other respect; cleanse the fountain, and the stream will be pure. But without the heart made right, though the coat be as precise in its shape as the Pharisee's long robe, still all will be wrong.

This same John Light was a very efficient and faithful minister of the gospel, mighty in word and doctrine. None ever lived more devotedly, and none ever met death more calmly. For weeks before he died he seemed to know the very hour when he would have to go. Accordingly, he set his house in order, made his will; and just before the summons came he gathered his family around him, gave them his farewell advice and his parting blessing, and then looking at the clock remarked, "my time has come," and died as calmly as if he had fallen asleep. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

This year, 1845, Mr. Kessler was stationed at Highspire; but scarcely had he fairly entered upon his labors when he was laid upon a bed of affliction. This prevented him from



attending the General Conference session, to which he had been elected a delegate. He lingered for weeks, and came so nigh the Jordan of death that at one time he was supposed to be dead. However, it pleased the Lord to gradually raise him up again. But he was not able to take charge of his field of labor during the remainder of that year, his throat being in such a condition that the slightest effort at public speaking would produce hemorrhage. For this year he received no salary, and was consequently in very straitened circumstances. While physically able, he engaged in manual labor, part of the time on his uncle's farm, and thereby got possession of a sufficient quantity of the commonest necessities of life, to subsist himself and family till the close of the year.

In 1846 the Pennsylvania Conference met in Springville, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. At this session the conference was again divided, one portion to be still known as the Pennsylvania Conference, the other to be known as the East Pennsylvania Conference. Nothing worthy of special note, other than above mentioned, transpired at this session. Mr. Kessler was assigned to Shopp's station,

Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, as a member of the Pennsylvania Conference. He moved his family to that place, and entered upon his labors in the shortest possible time. Samuel Maloy was sent to him as an assistant, but only preached a few times, when he took to his bed, and soon afterward died of consumption. He was a talented, intelligent young man, of great zeal, but delicate constitution. Had his physical strength been equal to his energy, he would have been long known as a useful man. As it was, the flame of his zeal soon consumed all his bodily strength; and the clay casket falling to pieces, the jewel was liberated and transferred to the bright clime of celestial light. His sun set in a clear sky, and his body awaits the resurrection of the just.

Mr. Kessler was now left alone, and continued thus throughout the year. He labored with apparently but little success until near the close of the year, the people taking but little interest in him, and he feeling but little interest in them. During a part of the year the people seemed illy satisfied with their pastor, simply because he did not in all things conform to their peculiar notions and adopt their plans of operation—a very grievous mistake, that is

but too often committed by the laity. There are, unfortunately, too many members in every Christian church who really believe they know exactly what a minister should be, how he should preach, and what modes of operation he should adopt. And when the minister, under a deep sense of his responsibility, ventures to lay claim to rationality enough to adopt his own style of dress, manner of preaching, and mode of operations, too many, whose duty it is to stand by and sustain him, are ready to openly oppose him, or assume an attitude of sullen indifference; simply because their peculiar whims are not gratified, or their modes of operation—often very impracticable—are not adopted. They seem to forget that each minister has his own work to do, and, to be successful, must have his own way of doing it, guided only by the word of God and such holy men of experience and usefulness as are worthy of his imitation. God and common sense alike seem to demand of him that he be natural, that he be himself, and avoid those disgusting attempts too frequently seen in the pulpit, at aping the peculiarities, eccentricities, tones, and gestures of his predecessors. Peculiarities and eccentricities, when *natural*, that is when they are a

part of the man's nature and disposition, may be attractive, and may often even assist the usefulness of a minister; but when artificial, or assumed, they render him only disgusting.

During the latter part of this year the membership became more generous toward their pastor, and evinced a lively interest in his welfare and the work in which he was engaged. And thus encouraged, a deeper interest than usual was awakened in his heart, in the welfare of the membership, and of the church generally, and he betook himself to his work with energy and a hearty good will. This reconciliation, mutual sympathy and energetic effort revived within the church, soon produced a salutary effect upon those without. The Lord visited his people again. A precious revival broke out, which resulted in scores of conversions and as many accessions to the church. The congregation became unusually large and interesting; and harmony and religious prosperity prevailed, without any interruption, throughout the rest of Mr. Kessler's stay at that place. Nor was he ever more loth to bid adieu to a field of labor, when the time came to leave, than to do so to this one.

The fall and winter seasons of 1846 were



very unhealthy in the vicinity of the Susquehannah River. This greatly increased Mr. Kessler's pastoral labors. He visited, some days, as high as twenty families, and found sick persons in almost every house, and in some from four to six prostrated, mostly with chills and fever, but some with more fatal diseases. Much of his time was occupied, also, in attending funerals, there being many deaths within the bounds of his charge during this year.

At this place Mr. Kessler also encountered the heresies of Millerism and Materialism, which proved to be sources of considerable annoyance, as they created uneasiness among the members of his own church, there always being some who are ever ready to run after some strange *ism*, declaring, "We have found the Christ." At first he determined to take no notice of the new heresies. But these strange doctrines made progress, and the members of his own church, especially the less stable ones, were becoming more or less contaminated. Observing this, Mr. Kessler determined to openly declare against them, believing that to continue silent any longer would be to incur guilt. So he gave the agitated questions some thought; and one Sabbath morning, the

house being well filled, he opened fire upon the enemy by delivering a very clear and forcible discourse against these modern heresies. Considerable excitement was produced. Some of the more fickle-minded of his own members took offense at his sermon, declaring that it was aimed at their neighbors, members of these new persuasions, whom they believed to be good men; failing to see that the discourse was aimed at the doctrine, and not at any particular man. The morning sermon was followed by one similar in kind, delivered at the same place in the evening; and from that time forward Mr. Kessler had no more trouble in that place, with Millerism and Materialism.

The year closed with peace and spiritual prosperity prevailing all over his charge, and he made ready to attend conference with a light heart. His salary for this year, exclusive of expenses, amounted to two hundred dollars.

Conference convened at Hershey's church, Bishop Wm. Hanby presiding. At this session considerable feeling was excited upon the subject of schools and colleges being built and sustained by the church. That something of the kind was much needed, was a fact evident to the minds of the more intelligent and liberal-

mined members of the conference. And yet but few of that body were willing to take hold and assist in building up and sustaining a college in the way that they were then desired to do. The Alleghany Conference had located a college in Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania; and their agent was present and presented a paper from that body, expressive of their earnest request that the Pennsylvania Conference co-operate with them in building up and sustaining Mount Pleasant College, and that they at once elect trustees. The conference having had no voice in locating the college, and it being located so many miles beyond the bounds of the territory included in the conference district, the great majority were opposed to co-operating with the Alleghany Conference, and so they decided by vote at this time.

The importance of sending a minister to the city of Philadelphia was considered during this session; and the conference having learned that there were a number of worthy persons residing in said city, who were formerly members of the Independent Methodist Church, and who were anxious to be received into the United Brethren Church, and supplied with a minister,

commissioned George Miller to go to Philadelphia, ascertain the true state of things, and organize a society, if he found material which he deemed worthy of church membership. He did so, and organized quite a promising society.

Mr. Kessler was returned to Shopp's station for the year 1847. His charge was in quite a healthy condition, spiritually, and he resumed his labors under very flattering prospects. He took up several new appointments, at some of which the church has since been permanently established. This year his labors were indeed herculean. Besides filling his regular appointments and holding protracted meetings, he had to officiate at very many funerals, at each of which he was required to preach a regular sermon. These funeral services, while they greatly increased his labors, nevertheless opened many doors of usefulness for him, and gave him influence over many persons whom he could not have reached in any other way. Many of the funerals at which he officiated were attended by a great concourse of persons, bound to the deceased by the ties of relationship; and by the sermon they became awakened, or at least their interest in the preacher



became so much aroused that they would come to hear him the second time, and conviction, resulting in conversion, would frequently follow. Many were in this way brought into the church, during the year.

During the winter of this year a general revival influence prevailed on the charge. Revivals were in progress at Shopp's church and Fairview, both at the same time. Old and young were made the happy partakers of converting grace, as well the gray-haired sinner of sixty as the tender youth of eleven, many of whom continue until this present time. "But some have fallen asleep." At these meetings some powerful outpourings of the Holy Spirit were experienced. One young man who had been seeking in great distress for a number of days, and had been forward at the altar for as many evenings, at length experienced the pardon of his sins, and ran toward his home, shouting "glory to God" at the top of his voice. When he arrived at home he aroused the entire family, and kept them awake the greater part of the night. Another man, who had been seeking religion for several years, came forward to the altar at this meeting, and labored very earnestly night after night, but

seemed to be making no progress. One evening it was noticed that he labored with more than usual energy, and in an instant his doubts were removed, light broke into his soul, and his mourning was turned into joy. At the same time the Holy Ghost came down in unusual power. Three or four were converted in the same moment; and many of the unconverted trembled and wept, and one of them fell senseless upon the floor. The members of the church were powerfully wrought upon. Many of them fell to the floor, while others embraced each other and shouted for joy. It was a scene of power and special rejoicing among the people of God, such as is rarely witnessed in this world.

These meetings continued for months, and their protraction prevented Mr. Kessler from attending the next sitting of the annual conference. Much as he desired to be present on that occasion, the more especially that he might, by taking sweet counsel with his ministerial brethren, gain courage and efficiency for the work that was before him, still he deemed it of more importance that he continue the meeting, at which God was so wonderfully pouring out his spirit, and at which so many were being converted.

The conference convened in Littlestown, Adams County, Pennsylvania, and assigned Mr. Kessler to Shopp's station for another—the third—year. The revival influence which so wonderfully prevailed on this charge the year previous did not abate in the least during this. The membership was truly alive. The love of God in their hearts prompted them to labor for their Master. Opportunities for doing good were anxiously sought after. The unconverted were visited and kindly spoken to on the subject of religion; and such an interest was manifested in their welfare, by the professors of religion, that they could not help but feel that these people were in earnest. Consequently conviction siezed them, and at every protracted effort the altar was crowded with anxious penitents, inquiring what they must do to be saved. O, the importance of concert of action between the laity and ministry, in their efforts to save souls! How abundantly fruitful of good are their labors when all work with a will—in hearty, good earnest. How sinners tremble under such a concentrated fire! How the very leaders of the hosts of hell on earth fall when assailed by volley upon volley, delivered by an army presenting such an unbroken

front! How pleasant and easy it is for the pastor of the flock to lead forth his band to battle with sin and Satan, when he feels assured that he is sustained by the *prayers, hands, TONGUES, and HEARTS* of every member of that band! Under such circumstances one can chase a thousand, and two can put ten thousand to flight. O, for singleness of heart, oneness of purpose, and concert of action throughout the entire army of the Lord on earth, from the highest official to the lowest private. Amen.

This year Mr. Kessler's labors were fully as great as the year previous. He attended a great many funerals, and visited numbers of sick and dying persons, the season being a very sickly one. In one family three sisters died of consumption, during the year. Their sickness being of a lingering character, they were frequently visited; and each gave her heart to God weeks before she died, and departed in great peace. At the time the second one was buried, the third, or youngest one of the three, seemed to be in very good health. But as the coffin containing the body of her sister was being lowered into the grave, the head-end of the coffin slipped from the rope on which it swung, and fell into the grave with a



crash. The lid burst off, and the head of the corpse protruded in a most ghastly manner, accompanied with such an offensive stench as only a human body in a state of decomposition in very warm weather can emit. Many of the ladies present screamed, and the bereaved, heart-broken sister swooned away. From that shock she never recovered; and in a few months death summoned her away, and her body was deposited by the side of her sisters. The sorrowing parents were deeply afflicted and almost heart-broken; yet they had this to comfort them, that their daughters all died in the triumph of a living faith. Being comforted with a firm trust in the Lord Jesus, they could say with Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" and with David, "They can not come to us, but we shall go to them." In their hours of deepest gloom and sorrow they could sing,

Daughters, dear, alas! we miss you ;  
How our hearts your absence mourn,  
Would we could once more embrace you ;  
But we know you'll ne'er return.

Gone from earth, we'll meet, ah! never  
Here on this terraqueous sphere;  
But in heaven, to part? no, never,  
Free from every grief and care.

Farewell then, but not forever ;  
Death will soon our spirits free,  
Then, through Christ, your father, mother,  
Hope in heaven your joys to see.

Two camp-meetings were held on this charge, during the three years that Mr. Kessler was pastor. These were seasons of special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, and resulted in many conversions and much general good.

His third year now drew to a close; and with much reluctance he prepared to take leave of the people with whom he had so long labored so very successfully, and with so much pleasure to himself. Gladly would he have continued three years longer on the same charge, for he felt that his work in that vicinity was still only half accomplished; but the rule of Discipline forbidding an itinerant to remain in charge of the same field of labor more than three years at one time, must be adhered to. This he was well aware of. And although his judgment disapproved of that rule being in every case rigidly enforced—yet knowing that it would be—he made the necessary preparations; and by the time the day for the assembling of conference came he had his accounts adjusted, and every thing ready to take

his final leave. But painful indeed were his feelings, as he bade adieu to those with whom he had enjoyed so much, and among whom it had been his privilege to see so much good accomplished.

For this year's services his salary amounted to two hundred dollars, exclusive of house-rent. On this sum he managed to maintain himself and wife tolerably comfortably; but to do so required the most rigid economy.

“When forced to part with those we love,  
Though sure to meet to-morrow;  
We yet a kind of anguish prove,  
And feel a touch of sorrow.

But oh! what words can paint the fears,  
When from these friends we sever,  
Perhaps to part for months—for years—  
Perhaps, on earth, forever.”

## CHAPTER X.

FIRST YEAR IN PHILADELPHIA—GLOOMY PROSPECTS—IN SEARCH OF  
A HOUSE—LIBERALITY AND FAITHFULNESS OF THE MEMBERSHIP—CHOLERA—A PRECIOUS REVIVAL.

The conference session for the year 1849 was held in Mower's church, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Bishop John Russel was the presiding officer. At this session it was decided to send a missionary to Philadelphia, to look after and organize into a class the members who had already been received into the United Brethren Church, and push forward, as rapidly as possible, the permanent establishment of the church in that city. This being determined upon, the next important step to be taken was to secure a proper man for the place. The appointment, or mission, was outside the bounds of the conference district; consequently no one felt like accepting the appointment; nor could any one be compelled to accept a charge not embraced in the conference to which he belonged. Mr. Kessler,



among others, was asked to accept the appointment, but, at first, refused most emphatically. However, that evening, after going to his lodging place, he made the matter a subject of prayer, and then came to the conclusion that he would leave the matter in the hands of conference, and if spoken to again by the Bishop respecting the matter, would inform him that if it was impossible to supply the mission unless he consented to go, they should send him, and he would do the best he could. The next morning, at an early hour, he was again requested by the Bishop to accept the appointment, and the above answer, which Mr. Kessler believed he had received from the Lord, was given. When the appointments were read off, his name was pronounced in connection with Philadelphia mission-station. Never had he wept over an appointment before; but now his tears flowed freely, and nearly every member of conference wept with him. The reflection that he was about to be sent to a distant field, far from friends, home, and kind associates, together with the conviction that he was in no way qualified for city life, nor able to meet the expectations of city people, almost overwhelmed him; and he found relief and balm

for his wounded, troubled soul only in spiritual communion with his heavenly Father. The first storm of grief and despondency having subsided; a serene calm took possession of his soul, and he submitted hopefully to his lot, cheered by the declaration, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear *no* evil; for *Thou art with me; Thy rod and staff, they comfort me.*"

As soon as the session of conference was over, he set out to Philadelphia to secure a house into which to move his family. In this, however, he failed, there being no houses to rent at that season of the year. Some of the brethren promised, if possible, to secure a house for him by the time he brought his family. He returned, brought on his family and goods, but no house had been secured. Consequently, he was compelled to take his family to a boarding-house, until a house could be secured; an arrangement which he accepted with much reluctance. He soon found that the boarding-house was a most unpleasant place, for one Sabbath evening, while he was out filling his appointment, one of the boarders, who had an altercation in a saloon, was brought into the boarding-house almost life-

less—horribly bruised, his face literally pounded into pulp, and covered with blood. This so much frightened his family that they declared they could stay there no longer. He was now in a great strait. No house had been secured. His goods were lying in the ware house. The membership of the church only numbered twenty souls, all told; and these were nearly all poor people, dependent upon their daily labor for a livelihood. None of these could take time to assist him in hunting up and securing a house, and he was altogether a stranger in the city, as ignorant of its customs and of the course to be pursued in order to speedily secure his object, as the most verdant backwoodsman. Unable to decide what to do, his way seemingly hedged up in every direction, he retired to his room and bowed before God in secret prayer. Strengthened in soul by fresh assurance of Divine favor, he set out in search of a house. He walked street after street, inquiring for a house, until he came to a place where there was a family moving out of a house which stood in a pleasant locality, and very convenient for him. He inquired if the house was for rent, and to his great joy ascertained that it was. While receiving informa-

tion as to where the landlord could be found, three or four men came up and inquired if the house was for rent. This convinced him that there was no time to lose; so he set out immediately for the place where the owner was engaged in business, which was nearly three miles distant, found him, and *secured the house!* This done, he returned with a light heart and quick step to report the result of his morning's walk to his family. This was joyful news indeed. In a few days the house was thoroughly cleaned, his goods removed to it, and the family snugly and comfortably housed therein.

By this time the little church edifice on Clinton Street, which the brethren were engaged in erecting, was under roof; but the work of finishing went on slowly. Consequently there was no commodious apartment in which to preach, or into which to invite a congregation. This was so discouraging that some of the members took their letters of dismissal and joined sister denominations. These things, all taken together, were well calculated to try the faith of the most resolute, and certainly put Mr. Kessler's to the severest test; and but for his firm reliance upon God, and his frequently communing with him in secret



prayer, his courage and hope would have failed, and he would have resigned the charge and left the city. But strengthened by his trust in a kind Providence, and believing that "God helps those who help themselves," he resolved to look for, and, if possible, secure a hall that would be suitable to worship in until the Clinton Street church could be finished. He soon secured a hall, quite suitable and conveniently situated. Into this he gathered his little flock and preached to them each Sabbath, morning and evening. During the week-day evenings they held prayer- and class-meetings in private dwellings, when some eight or ten backsliders were reclaimed. These meetings soon attracted more people than could enter the private houses in which they were held and a good work of moral reformation was here commenced, which continued with great power until the next sitting of annual conference. Mr. Kessler here states that, in his opinion, there never was a more faithful, devoted band of Christians than that which constituted the United Brethren Church in Philadelphia, at that time. The faithful, zealous manner in which they attended prayer- and class-meetings, and in fact discharged every

Christian duty—he had never witnessed the like in any before—compelled him to feel that they were, in these respects, unequaled by any professors of religion with whom he had before labored. And the cheerful and liberal manner in which they contributed of their means to the support of their pastor, made him feel assured that, for liberality, they had no equals any-where. There was one sister, eighty years old, who came regularly a distance of a mile to prayer- and class-meetings, and contributed annually her three dollars to the support of her pastor; and, including what she gave to benevolent purposes, her alms each year amounted to from six to eight dollars. All this, together with her entire living, she earned by washing and cleaning house. Besides all this, she never failed to bring her pastor a fine turkey each New-year's-day, for a New-year's present. In addition to all this, she frequently bestowed many other little gifts upon him and his family. Mr. Kessler often felt like refusing to accept her gifts, knowing how needy she was herself, and how by dint of hard labor she had earned them. But to have done so would have been to inflict the greatest grief upon her; so, with many thanks and tears, he accepted her gifts,

praying that the Lord might reward her liberality. At one time she was afflicted with a felon, so that she could do no work for several weeks. As soon as Mr. Kessler heard of this he paid her a visit, thinking that she might be in want. He found her with a smile on her countenance, such as most unmistakably pointed to a cheerful heart within. After some conversation and prayer, he asked her if she was in want. "O, no sir!" she replied with a smile; "I never was in want and never expect to be. I trust in the Lord, who is my provider, and he gives me plenty of kind friends who would not let me come to want."

It may not be improper here to give a brief account of the manner in which the people of Philadelphia—those who became members of the United Brethren Church—first obtained a knowledge of the existence and doctrines of that denomination. It was as follows: A member of the Methodist Episcopal Church residing in Philadelphia, Norcross by name, while on a business tour to Cincinnati, Ohio, happened to attend preaching while there at the United Brethren Church of that city. He there purchased of the pastor, Rev. Jacob Emrick, a United Brethren Church Discipline,



and brought it with him to Philadelphia. Being much pleased with it, Mr. Norcross passed it round among his friends; and it happened to fall into the hands of a small body of professors of religion who just then belonged to no branch of the Christian church, but who had been previously known as primitive Methodists. Their pastor, Rev. Mr. White, a native of England, a man of devoted piety, had deceased, and they were left without a preacher. J. W. Bonewell, a local minister among them, supplied the place vacated by the death of Rev. Mr. White, for several years, until the United Brethren Church Discipline, brought to the city by Mr. Norcross, found its way among them. They examined the Discipline, and were much pleased with the doctrines, rules, and regulations of the church therein set forth, and resolved at once to send Rev. J. W. Bonewell to the Pennsylvania Conference, to request that body to send a minister to receive them into the church and become their pastor. This was in the spring of 1847. Rev. George Miller was sent by the conference to receive them into the church, and Rev. J. W. Bonewell was continued their pastor for two years from that time. During



these two years, this little society was tempest-tossed, persecuted, and tried; and considering the fact that they were without a public house of worship, they certainly did well to retain their organization and keep up their regular meetings. The 20th day of June, 1849, their little church edifice on Clinton Street was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God. Rev. Jacob Erb and Rev. Alexander Owen were present and performed the dedicatory services, assisted by Mr. Kessler. The dedication took place under very discouraging circumstances. Just the evening previous, the Asiatic cholera broke out in the city with great violence. The people became very much alarmed and feared to congregate in any place, for no quarter of the city seemed to be entirely exempt from its attack. However, the church was dedicated, a very small congregation being present to witness the ceremony. But there was a great stagnation in church matters in the city until late in October of that year. While the cholera raged, many of the residents fled from the city; and it was thought that it would be prudent for Mr. Kessler to take his family to the country, while the epidemic continued. This, however, he was very loth to do. But his family

becoming alarmed, he proposed that they go to Cumberland County and remain there during the summer, and he would remain in the city and see after his flock. To this arrangement his family would not consent, so it was determined that all would remain in the city. Thus the question was settled. They remained in the city; and although the cholera made dreadful havoc they enjoyed good health, even better than they had for a number of years. Mr. Kessler being but slightly acquainted in the city, remained at home most of the time, except such portions as were spent in visiting his few parishoners. He attended one funeral where the deceased had died of cholera. But not one of the members of his church fell a victim to that terrible scourge; though scores and hundreds fell all around them. Thus mercifully preserved, both pastor and people thanked God and took courage.

Though he preached regularly in the new church from the time it was dedicated, yet he did not succeed in collecting a congregation large enough to fill the little inclosure until near New-year's-day. The night preceding that day he held watch-meeting, at which a revival commenced, that resulted in a goodly number

of conversions. The revival excited the envy and jealousy of many professing to be Christians, belonging to sister denominations, from whom he had expected better things. He and his little flock from that day became the victims of a bitter persecution. However, all this did not suppress the good work. The revival continued. Crowds flocked to the church, and nearly every evening one or more received the right hand of fellowship. The meeting was protracted till within a few days of the time for the assembling of conference. The furnishing of the new church building cost, in all, about two hundred dollars, which sum had to be raised by the few members belonging to the society at the time the house was dedicated. This taxed them so heavily that they were not able to pay much toward the support of their pastor, consequently he was almost wholly dependent upon the missionary society for his living. From this source the money was to come on which he and his family were to subsist; and frequently the money was slow in coming, and small in quantity when it did come. At one time he had only twenty-five cents in his pocket. As he sat at the table with his family, partaking of a scanty meal, he

referred to the straitened circumstances in which they found themselves. All hearts were sad indeed. Living in a strange city, he did not like to ask for credit or contract debts. Another day and their last penny would be expended, and they knew not when they would receive any more. While thus gloomily musing over their prospects for the future, the mail-carrier stopped at the door and handed in a letter. On opening it, it was found to contain a nice sum of money. O, what a welcome messenger! How it drove doubt and gloom from their hearts. To them it was truly an angel's visit.

From the revival in the Clinton Street church the name of the United Brethren Church spread to different parts of the city, and even into the states of New Jersey and Delaware; and quite a number of calls came for the United Brethren in Christ to send missionaries to different places in those states. At one place, a thrifty town in New Jersey, some twelve miles south of Philadelphia, a gentleman offered to furnish a lot on which to erect a house of worship, and head the subscription with five hundred dollars, if the United Brethren would only send a missionary. But this important call was most shamefully neglected.



Had this, with other calls, been promptly responded to, the United Brethren in Christ might have, long since, been well established in those states. As it is, she is scarcely known in either. Quite a number of persons, who were once members of the church in Philadelphia, removed to those states, and regretted very much on doing so, that they were compelled to part with the church of their choice. They were compelled to take their certificates of good standing, and then hand them in to sister denominations. And this was not only the case with those moving out of the city, but with many who moved from one part of the city to another. Hence there was a constant draw on the little society of which Mr. Kessler was pastor. The conference year now approached its close, and he began to make arrangements to attend its next annual session. For this year's services he received, in all, two hundred dollars, exclusive of house-rent, which was of itself one hundred and fifteen dollars. The year's labor ended in the midst of a most precious revival; and in reviewing his year's work, Mr. Kessler could but feel that although he had accepted the appointment very, *very* reluctantly; yet in

accepting it he had obeyed the directing influences of the Holy Spirit. He had seen trials, discouragements, and even pestilence; but out of them all the Lord had delivered both him and his. And now in quitting his flock to attend conference, he left it in a most prosperous condition; and with the consciousness of the fact that in his honest endeavors to do the will of God while among them he had so endeared himself to their hearts that in parting with him they felt as if they were parting with a father, their grief was only prevented from assuming the wildest form of expression, by the assurance that he would be returned to them the following year. In looking back over the year's work he could truly say, "*I am satisfied. I have no regrets.*"

## CHAPTER XI.

STILL IN PHILADELPHIA—EXTENSIVE LABORS IN THE PULPIT  
AND AMONG THE SICK AND DEAD—CONFESSION OF AN INFI-  
DEL—TRIUMPHANT DEATH OF A YOUNG LADY—AWFUL DEATH  
OF A YOUNG LADY—HIS WIFE DIES—CLOSE OF THE CONFER-  
ENCE YEAR—REFLECTIONS.

The annual session of the Pennsylvania Conference for the year 1850 was held in York, York County, Pennsylvania, and was, altogether, one of the most interesting, pleasant, and profitable sessions of that body. The business was transacted with harmony and dispatch; and a more enlarged and intelligent view was taken by the conference of their mission, and the duty of the United Brethren Church, than was ever entertained by that body before. All the pulpits of the different Christian denominations in the borough of York, with but one or two exceptions, were filled Sabbath morning and evening, by members of conference; and the session made a very favorable impression upon the inhabitants, both in behalf of the United Brethren Church and the cause

of Christ generally. Mr. Kessler was returned to Philadelphia Mission-station for another year. He resumed his labors full of hope, and prosecuted them with his usual untiring zeal and energy, ever looking in faith to God for support and direction. His congregations were large, and a deep interest in the good cause was manifested upon the part of the members. In addition to attending faithfully to his regular pastoral duties, he spent much time in visiting sick persons who did not belong to his congregation. By this means his acquaintance and influence were much extended, and he became so well known in that part of the city where he resided, as a faithful visitor of the afflicted, that it was nothing unusual for him to be called up at any hour of the night, to visit and pray with the sick and dying. Soon after he returned from conference he was one night aroused at a very late hour, by the daughter of a man who professed to be an infidel. She had come, in company with another young lady, to request him to go and see her father, who was then very sick. Mr. Kessler arose and went with them, and found the dying man very low but perfectly sane, and conscious of all that was transpiring



around him. Mr. Kessler at once spoke to him of man's helpless and lost condition by nature, on account of his willful violation of God's righteous law; of the bounteous provisions made for his salvation from the consequences of sin, as set forth in the gospel plan; of the assurances we have of God's anxiety and willingness to save all that will come unto him for salvation, as evinced in the gift of his only and well-beloved Son, who died for our sins; and assured him that, if he would but believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, it was his privilege, even on his death-bed, to claim him as his Savior, and accept of him by faith to the salvation of his soul. Having thus instructed and exhorted him, Mr. Kessler kneeled by his bed-side, and offered up a fervent prayer. He then arose from his knees and found that the dying man had become earnestly engaged in prayer. He sung and prayed with him for an hour or more, when he suddenly began to praise God with a loud voice, for providing for him so great a savior in his time of greatest need. He continued very happy for several hours, and then died assuring those about him that, through Christ, he was going home to glory. Though Mr. Kessler never had very

much faith in death-bed repentance, yet it was his firm conviction that this man was truly converted and happily saved at this inopportune hour. Instead of his being a confirmed infidel, it was the opinion of Mr. Kessler that he was only one of that class of persons who, from seeing so many inconsistencies in the lives of many who stand high in the various branches of the Christian church, *tried* to believe that there was no reality in the religion of the Bible; and that although by thus *trying* to disbelieve the Bible, he succeeded in stifling conviction till brought to his death-bed, yet he never became a confirmed unbeliever. There is reason for believing that there are many such persons in the world; and for their unbelief those church-members whose lives belie their profession are terribly accountable. What an awful hell awaits the hypocrite!

“ — in the lowest deep a lower deep,  
Still threat'ning to devour him, opens wide!”

By his very faithful visiting among the sick, and especially among the poor people, who were shamefully neglected by the city clergy, he gained a great influence, and became widely known. Often was he sent for, sometimes to visit the sick, and very frequently to

officiate at funerals. Scarcely a week passed but he had three or four to attend, and sometimes as many as three on the Sabbath-day. This added greatly to his labors, but at the same time brought many into the church to hear preaching, not a few of whom were sooner or later converted to God, and became members of the society.

One night about twelve o'clock he was called upon and requested to go immediately to see a young lady of distinction, who was then lying very ill, and who was very anxious to see him. He at once obeyed the summons. He found her to be a young lady who had, at an early age, been regularly received into membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and had lived a remarkably pious life from her youth—punctual and faithful in the discharge of all the Christian duties. None of her acquaintances thought any thing else than that she was a true Christian *indeed*. But while lying on a bed of affliction, gradually drawing near to death, she became distressingly alarmed about the welfare of her soul. When Mr. Kessler entered her chamber, he found her in great distress of mind, affirming that she was such a great sinner, and that her sins would sink her down to

hell. Her aged mother stood by her bed-side doing all she could to quell her fears, assuring her that she was not a sinner, that she had been good from her very infancy, and never did a wicked deed. All this did not seem to afford her the least degree of comfort. She still lamented her lost condition. Mr. Kessler approached her bed-side, and having secured her attention, assured her that it was just as she said—that by nature she was a great sinner, as was every body else, that she could not save herself, that she was lost. “But,” said he, “my Bible says that *Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost.*” “And,” continued he, “it further declares that this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.* For God *so loved the world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” At this her countenance seemed to brighten, and he kneeled in prayer. On rising from prayer he found it necessary to withdraw, to make way for the physician who had arrived. He left for home, but was scarcely out of the house, when she experienced a change of heart and commenced



to shout glory to God with all the strength of voice she could command. In a few hours she sent for Mr. Kessler again, desiring to tell him what the Lord had done for her soul. He found her very happy, her soul full to overflowing of the love of God. She spoke of the joy she experienced to every one that entered her chamber, and exhorted them to rest not until, by blest experience, they had realized that God, for Christ's sake, hath power on earth to forgive sins. He then left again; but early in the evening she sent for him the third time, and when he came she declared that he must stay by her bed-side until she ceased to breathe. Sometime in the early part of the night he stepped into an adjoining room, and she quickly called to him, and said he must not leave her until she was gone. About midnight she requested him to sing and pray with her once more before she died. He did so, and the prayer concluded she called her husband, parents, and friends to her bed-side and bade them all an affectionate farewell, earnestly exhorting each to seek the same dear Savior she had found, and meet her in heaven. This done, she fell into an unconscious state, in which she continued until six o'clock the next

morning, when her spirit took its flight. Her conversion made a very deep impression upon the minds of all who were acquainted with her, and learned the circumstances connected with her death; and most sensibly did it alarm some who had hitherto been satisfied with simply having their names enrolled on the register of some popular branch of the Christian church.

During the whole of this year the United Brethren Church in Philadelphia enjoyed one continuous revival season, and by the time it closed there were upward of ninety added to the society. This number does not include near all that were converted during the year; for many who there experienced the pardon of their sins were never again seen in the church after their conversion. And many others united with other more popular and more aristocratic branches of the Christian church, the little chapel on Clinton Street, though large enough and sufficiently popular for them to find the Savior in, being *quite too small* for them to become regular worshipers in it.

As might be expected, the continuous revival season enjoyed by this humble little congregation, and the inroads they made into Satan's ranks, aroused the ire of his evil majesty;

and he stirred up some "lewd fellows of the baser sort," who did all they could to annoy both the pastor and his little flock. Nor did the persecutions heaped upon this people proceed wholly from those who made no profession of religion. Even some ministers of the gospel, belonging to sister denominations, did what they could to cast reproach upon this little congregation and their pastor, doubtless being envious of the gracious revivals and spiritual prosperity enjoyed by them. It is stated with pleasure, however, that there were some noble exceptions to these remarks. The local ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church residing in the vicinity heartily co-operated with Mr. Kessler, and lent him very efficient aid during his revivals. Many sermons were preached by them to his congregation; and their timely, whole-souled assistance did much toward rendering these meetings a complete success. At the close of this year, which now arrived, the footing up of his accounts showed that he had received, for salary, two hundred dollars, and for house-rent one hundred and fifteen dollars. However, it should be remarked that for fifty dollars of this year's salary he was given an order on the treasurer

of the Missionary Society of the East Pennsylvania Conference, which amount he only received after four years' patient waiting.

The Pennsylvania Conference session of 1851 was held in Jefferson, York County, Pennsylvania. Mr. Kessler was present during the session, and returned from it to the Philadelphia Mission-station for another year. He continued to labor during the year with his usual energy and faithfulness; and his success was as great as could possibly be expected, considering the difficulties and opposition with which he had to contend. His little church building was now quite too small for the congregation, and the lecture-room would not accommodate the Sabbath-school. The membership numbered three hundred communicants, and the Sabbath-school quite as many pupils. This want of a more commodious house of worship begat uneasiness and discontent in the society. Some were in favor of securing a suitable house and location, and commencing operations in some part of the city adjacent to the Clinton Street church by opening a Sabbath-school and having preaching there. Others desired to have the little church re-modeled and enlarged, so as to make it capable of



accommodating the large and rapidly-increasing congregation and school. The wants of the congregation, together with these different contemplated projects, had been laid before conference at the previous session, and that body earnestly urged to assist as much as possible, in providing a place for worship sufficiently large to accommodate the congregation. But it refused at that time to do any thing in that direction, thereby evincing a lack of enterprise and foresight culpable in a high degree. The refusal of conference to lend any assistance being reported to the congregation, many of the more enterprising and restless persons became highly dissatisfied; and seeing no grounds for hope of a change for the better, quite a number scattered off and connected themselves with other branches of the Christian church. It would seem that under such circumstances the heart and courage of the most hopeful would fail. But although Mr. Kessler by these things was much discouraged, yet he did not despair. He resolved to do the very best he could under the circumstances, and continued faithfully at his post; and, in spite of dissensions and difficulties, his labors were crowned with the conversion of scores of

souls. As in the preceding years, his labors among the afflicted were very extensive, and much of his time was occupied in attending funerals.

Among others whom he was called in to see during this year was a young lady of wealth and refinement. She was extremely fond of dress and fashionable society, much given to attending balls, theaters, operas, and all such places of vain amusements as were resorted to by the giddy, gay, and aristocratic young men and women of the city, and was betrothed to a young man of wealth and character. She had received a card inviting her to attend a ball that was expected to be a most superb thing of the kind, but was not to come off for several weeks, and betook herself to making the most extensive preparation for that occasion. While both mind and body were busily engaged that she might appear at the party "*à la mode*." She was taken slightly ill with what was at first only regarded as a severe cold. At this neither she nor her parents felt any alarm, all expecting that she would soon recover; but to the contrary, she grew worse and worse each day. Still she did not abandon the idea of attending the ball. Her whole

heart seemed to be set on that event, as one that was to afford her the most inconceivable pleasure. Nor would she, even when the disease had so reduced her that she was scarcely able to walk through the room, consent to take her bed. As if determined not to yield to its power, she would recline upon the sofa or sit bolstered up in a large arm-chair, striving with all her power to believe and convince others that she was rapidly recovering. The costly, gaudy apparel, and splendid party she expected soon to attend, constantly occupied her thoughts, and were her only topics of conversation. If her friends expressed in her presence a doubt or a fear as to the result of her sickness, she took it as a high offense, and reproved them sharply, asserting that she might easily outlive all of them. Thus she lingered along, daily wasting away, until her physical energies were completely exhausted, when her friends finally took her up bodily, carried her to her chamber, and laid her upon her bed. She was so far gone that she almost expired in their arms, but still would not believe that she would not recover, so tenaciously did she cling to life and struggle against death. The fall was now at hand, and her

nuptials were soon to have been celebrated; and nothing could persuade her that she was not to live to enjoy both these, to her, important events. She still declared that she was too young to die; that it was foolish and cruel for her friends to worry her mind, by intimating that she was in any real danger. But in spite of her declarations, her friends saw too clearly that she had but a few hours to live, and sent, in all haste, for Mr. Kessler. He promptly obeyed the summons, and in a few minutes found his way to the dwelling in which the young lady lay. He was kindly received by some of the inmates, and escorted into a large sitting-room. Observing that all about the house was unusually quiet, after sitting a few moments he inquired of the condition of the young lady, and was startled by the answer, "She is dead, sir! she expired a few minutes before you came in." O, what a death! Instead of occupying the precious time God gave her, in preparing for that solemn change, all those golden moments were squandered on the vanities of this life. The hours that should have been spent in meditating upon eternal things were wasted in idly musing upon the theater and opera, or



employed in making preparations for the dance or the fashionable entertainment. It is a solemn thing, under any circumstance, to die; but to be torn away from earth, without any preparation, the heart still holding on to worldly vanities with a most tenacious grasp, is certainly dreadful in the extreme.

So Mr. Kessler thought; and when kindly invited by her weeping friends to attend her funeral and preach a sermon on the occasion, he felt that to do so was a most grievous task. What could he say? There was not a single promise to which he could direct the minds of her friends, or one on which they could rest a hope that she was saved. On the other hand, the case, to his mind, was a clear one, that she died as she lived—without Christ and without hope. Most gladly would he have encouraged her kindred to hope to meet her in a better world; but there was no foundation for hope. There can be no more unpleasant task imposed upon a minister than that of preaching a funeral sermon under such circumstances. However, he consented, resolving to do the best he could. Not wishing to wound, too deeply, the hearts of her parents, who were already so deeply stricken, he spoke mostly of death as a

heartless monster, who cut down as well the young as the old, utterly regardless of the strong ties by which his victims might be bound to this world, or the tender manner in which the same might be loved by kind parents and friends, and closed with a very solemn and impressive appeal to all, to be always ready for the summons of the King of Terrors, inasmuch as none knew the day nor the hour when he would call them.

The conference year now approached its close. During this winter Mr. Kessler had much sickness in his family, and before the year should expire he was destined to pass through the deepest shadows of his life. That faithful companion, the wife of his bosom, who had so long stood by him, sharing with him the difficulties and the deep deprivations and sufferings of his itinerant life, was to be stricken down at his side. The 24th of March was the day when this sad event occurred. The blow fell with crushing weight upon him; and he could illy have borne it were it not that, as he stood by her lifeless form, gazing upon it for the last time, he was cheered by the blessed thought, "*we shall meet again.*" That thought ever after cheered him in his lonely hours.

O, the blessed doctrine of the resurrection of the just! Who that has lost a dear friend, parent, brother, sister, or companion, would give up that doctrine?

“Yet again we hope to meet thee,  
When the day of life is fled;  
Then in heaven, with joy to greet thee,  
Where no farewell tears are shed.”

This year the United Brethren society in the city sustained itself, independently of aid from the missionary treasury. When the time for the annual sitting of the conference came Mr. Kessler was engaged in a revival, and found it difficult to leave. However, as it was important that the interests of the work in Philadelphia be laid before that body, he determined to attend. His accounts showed that he had received for this year's services about the same as he did the year previous; and although many difficulties had presented themselves during the year, yet the little society had managed to retain its numerical, financial, and spiritual strength. When leaving for conference and reviewing the events and the labors, with their results, of the past year, and although almost crushed by the loss of

his dearly beloved companion, yet still he could sing with Madam Guyon:

“If life in sorrow must be spent,  
So be it, I am well content;  
And meekly wait my last remove,  
Desiring only trustful love.

No bliss I'll seek, but to fulfill  
In life, in death, Thy perfect will;  
No succor in my woes I want,  
But what my Lord is pleased to grant.”



## CHAPTER XII.

FOURTH YEAR IN PHILADELPHIA—PERSECUTIONS—TROUBLES—  
REVIVALS—CLOSE OF THE YEAR—SENT TO HARRISBURG—PRO-  
TRACTED ILLNESS—SEES A VISION—SENT TO PHILADELPHIA—  
FINANCIAL EMBARRASMENTS—NEGLECTED BY THE BRETHREN,  
&c., &c.

The annual session of conference for the year 1852 convened in Greencastle, Franklin County, Pennsylvania. At this session a resolution was passed expressive of the determination of that body to abide by and enforce the rule of Discipline relative to secret societies. The usual business of the session being transacted conference adjourned, and Mr. Kessler returned to Philadelphia for the fourth year, the former part of which proved to be a season of peculiar trial, both to him and his congregation.

Soon after his return from conference some members of the society, whose zeal and arbitrariness far excelled their financial, mental, or moral abilities, commenced to agitate the question of dividing both the Sabbath-school and

the society, and starting a new Sabbath-school and a new society in another part of the city. The object of these persons was, it is to be feared, rather their own exaltation than the advancement of Christ's kingdom. Not being able to control the old society, they wished to establish a new one in which *they* would be considered the leading spirits. Failing in this, they became sour and revengeful; and the resolution of conference relative to the secrecy question falling under their eyes, they instantly grasped it, hoping, it is believed, that they had found the wedge by which to split the society. Not only did they by their clamoring breed and stir up uneasiness and dissensions *in* the society, but by misrepresenting the church to those without, who were members of and friends to secret orders, they succeeded in arousing prejudices against the little society that worshiped in the Clinton Street chapel, which it was difficult to allay, and which greatly incumbered the efforts of the pastor and his flock.

Nor did their malignity and vindictiveness stop here. Having made all the capital they could out of the secrecy question, they began to apply the vile tongue of slander to the un-

impeachable and hitherto unimpeached character of their faithful pastor, Mr. Kessler, determining, if possible, to ruin both him and his congregation. But this slanderous assault upon his character was a most signal failure. He was too well known for them to do him much injury by circulating the improbable falsehoods which were invented. The good name that he had established by three years' earnest, consistent Christian effort, and by always demeaning himself in the most prudent, upright, and exemplary manner, could not be swept away by a few monstrous lies issued from the lips of those whose names were never associated with any thing that was very praiseworthy or commendable. In their attempts to divide the society and defame its pastor they failed completely, and brought dishonor and reproach upon themselves.

The devil and his allies, having been signally defeated in this terrible assault upon Mr. Kessler and his flock, slunk away for a time, and they were left to engage in a hearty effort to push forward the work of God in their midst, and a precious revival was soon in progress. The church was crowded every evening. Penitents in great numbers found their way to

the altar, and scores were happily converted to God.

One Sabbath evening during this revival Mr. Kessler, while preaching, observed a young man in the congregation with a very pale, emaciated countenance. After listening attentively for some time to the words of the preacher, the young man arose suddenly and withdrew from the house. Just as the sermon was concluded a gentleman entered the house, and, walking up to Mr. Kessler, informed him that he was earnestly requested to visit, immediately, a young man who was thought to be in a dying condition. He obeyed the summons, and in a short time found himself by the side of a bed on which lay the same young man whom he had noticed withdrawing from the church half an hour previous. He had been taken suddenly with hemorrhage of the lungs, and his strength was so far exhausted that he scarcely retained power to breathe. Appliances were diligently used to prevent suffocation. As soon as he could utter an audible expression he requested Mr. Kessler to pray for him. He believed himself to be on the verge of eternity, and was greatly alarmed about the salvation of his soul. Mr. Kessler



pointed him to the Savior with much earnestness, and encouraged him to cast all his care upon the sinner's Friend, by exercising a living faith in his willingness and ability to save, assuring him that none ever sought Him in vain. It is believed he did as directed, for he soon enjoyed great peace of mind, and expressed his complete reconciliation to the Divine will.

Mr. Kessler, having lost his wife, did not keep house this year, but boarded with Mr. Daniel M. Curry, a man possessed of a very kind and generous disposition, and at whose hands, with those of his wife and children, he received many proofs of kindness. Mr. Curry's wife was a most kind and exemplary Christian lady, and their children were among the most affectionate, obliging, and obedient with whom he had ever become acquainted. Their house was truly a well-regulated Christian home, in which the spirit of love reigned supreme. Mr. and Mrs. Curry were both converted under the pastoral labors of Mr. Kessler, and by him admitted to membership in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Long was their memory cherished, and their many deeds of kindness were never forgotten by him.

His fourth year's labor in Philadelphia now approached its close; and in reviewing the toils of those four years, with their anxieties and results, Mr. Kessler's heart swelled with gratitude to God. Never had he labored so long in one place before, and never were his labors, all through, crowned with such complete success. Scores and hundreds had been happily converted to God under his ministry, in those four years. Some of these he had seen die in the triumphs of a living faith; some had emigrated to distant lands, carrying with them the fire of God's love in the heart, first lighted at the altar in the little church on Clinton Street, while others remained clustered around that little sanctuary, to keep alive the holy fire there. The thought of parting with these dear ones gave his heart a pang. Like Paul, he felt like weeping, and did weep. In faith he committed them to the tender mercies and faithful keeping of Him who noteth even the fall of a sparrow. A consciousness of the fact that there was still so much to be done in this great city made him loth to leave. He had learned much of the nature and wants of the people, and felt prepared to work among them to advantage; and most

gladly would he have continued among them with the hope of doing something to stay the progress of sin, and rescuing souls from eternal death. His heart was pained at seeing the many devices by which Satan, in large cities, drags young and old down to perdition. O, those under-currents of vice and debauchery! Those cess-pools of corruption and degradation! Those baneful, body-destroying, soul-damning influences by which the innocent, unsuspecting youth, are ensnared and dragged into the yawning gulf of hell! How they prevail in our large cities. No wonder the cholera and pestilence come. They are God's moral scavengers, by which he removes, suddenly and unceremoniously, those debasing infections which, if undisturbed, the moral sentiment of the city could no longer successfully resist.

The time was now at hand for Mr. Kessler to take a final leave of his congregation. This was a most affecting occasion. The tears of both pastor and people flowed freely. After an impressive farewell sermon the members of his congregation, each in turn, took his hand for the last time and bade him an affectionate FAREWELL. His salary for the year amounted to two hundred dollars.

He now set out for conference, which convened in Littlestown, Adams County, Pennsylvania. At this session a pressing application was made by the brethren residing in Harrisburg for Mr. Kessler to be sent to their city as a missionary. The conference saw fit to comply with this request, and assigned him accordingly. Before repairing to his new field of labor he attended the annual session, for that year, of the East Pennsylvania Conference, having some business of a financial character, growing out of his labors in Philadelphia, to transact with that body. The Saturday evening and Sabbath of this session he spent in Snyderstown. This village and the surrounding country were then peopled mostly with a German population. On Saturday evening he preached a sermon in the German language, on Sunday morning a sermon in the English language, and on Sunday evening another in the German. While preaching on Sabbath evening a man rose up in the congregation and commenced to clap his hands and praise God with a loud voice. This man had never enjoyed religion until that evening, nor had he ever made any profession to that effect; but while listening to the words of life as they fell



from the preacher's lips, his faith took hold of the promises of God, and he immediately received the witness of the Holy Spirit. He has since died a peaceful and triumphant death.

At the close of the conference Mr. Kessler set out for Harrisburg, to enter upon the duties awaiting him there. For several months he preached and visited with apparently but little success. He was a stranger to the people, and they were such to him. He could not at a glance comprehend their dispositions and wants, nor did they feel free to approach him familiarly. It required time for him to know his people, and for them to become interested in and appreciate him. In fact, one of his peculiarities—if it be a peculiarity—was that the longer he remained with a people to the better advantage he could labor among them.

Some time in October of this year he succeeded in starting quite an interesting revival in his church, but was soon deprived of attending it, by a severe attack of sickness. This occurred about the first of November. It commenced with a severe pain in the region of the left knee, which, after causing an almost inconceivable amount of suffering, resulted in

a very large ulcer. This was succeeded by several smaller ones in the same region, all of which discharged very freely for several weeks. At the same time his lungs became affected, and the physician pronounced him in great danger of being carried off by hasty consumption. But as the ulcers healed his lungs began to improve, and in time became as sound as ever.

Having become able to move around in the room upon crutches, he one morning, in attempting to go down stairs to breakfast, lost his balance near the top, and was precipitated down to the bottom with terrible violence. In the fall the cap of his left knee—the same in which he suffered so much from the ulcers—was split, his face was horribly cut, and his body more or less bruised. The physician was summoned, his wounds were dressed, and he was conveyed to his bed. Soon after this he was severely attacked by rheumatism, which seemed to affect his entire system. For several weeks he was not able to use his right arm in the least, and had to be fed like a child. Eight months in all elapsed—during most of which he was closely confined to his room and endured an almost incredible amount of

suffering—in which he did not preach a single sermon. But in all these afflictions he was sustained by an unfaltering trust in God. Never for a moment did he doubt or question his goodness and justice. The love of Christ illumined his soul during all these trying hours, and sometimes he enjoyed a perfect heaven on earth. While his body was tortured with disease, his mind was mostly engaged in contemplating the goodness of God, and that state of ineffable glory which awaits the righteous in the life to come. At one time he fell into a state similar to a trance. He saw himself carried away to heaven by a convoy of angels. On entering heaven the Savior met him, extended to him a hand of welcome, and then conducted him into different mansions of most dazzling and inconceivable splendor. In one of these he saw the multitude of those who had embraced religion under his labors. At the command of the Savior they all congregated in one place, apart from the vast concourse of the heavenly inhabitants, and he was greatly astonished to see that their number was so great. When he awoke from this vision, he felt sorry that he was called back from such a place of glory and happiness, to a world

of sin and suffering. But though loth to continue longer in the body, after seeing what he believed to be a glimpse of the reward in reserve for him, yet he was fully resigned to the will of his Master, contented to go at once or await his good pleasure.

For weeks after this he was in a most happy frame of mind—full of the Holy Ghost. Betimes he would shout the praise of God aloud; and most impressively would he exhort all who entered his room to diligence and consistency in the service of the Lord. Many went from his room most deeply moved, and not a few were convicted of sin for the first time in their lives, while standing by his bedside.

The conference year now closed, but Mr. Kessler was not able to attend this annual session. The Harrisburg charge was properly within the bounds of the East Pennsylvania Conference district, and belonged to that conference; but the Pennsylvania Conference had, by request, sent Mr. Kessler there for one year. His time having expired, the conference which assembled in 1854 assigned him to Rocky Spring Circuit. To this, however, he was not able to go, his health not being



sufficiently recovered to enable him to travel a circuit. The presiding elders then attempted to make a change, and send him to York Station; but in this they failed. It was then proposed to send him to Lancaster City; but through misrepresentation objections to that proposal were stirred up, and he declined the appointment, and determined to remain without a charge for one year.

About the time his health and strength were sufficiently recovered so that he could take charge of a work, or rather some time before that, the health of the pastor in Philadelphia broke down. As soon as it was known that Mr. Kessler was able to preach again, he was requested to take charge of the work in that city. He consented, and removed there at once. When he arrived he found things in a distracted condition. The former pastor having been unable to preach for some time, the flock was considerably scattered. He saw at once that they could not support him and his wife, —he had married the second time in 1853— that is, pay a married man's salary, so he told them that if they would just pay their traveling expenses and boarding he would preach for them until the close of the year. But even

this they failed to do for the first two or three months; and the consequence was, he was compelled to take to selling books to enable him to get along without contracting debts, a thing that he would never do if it could in any way be avoided. He had seen the evil of ministers purchasing on credit, expecting to pay when they received their salary toward the close of the year; for not unfrequently was it the case that those ministers did not receive more than one half the salary they had expected, and consequently they were not able to pay their debts. This would give occasion to the enemies of the ministry to speak reproachfully of them; for although it was considered nothing worthy of note for a congregation or circuit to withhold a hundred dollars of their preacher's salary annually, yet if, through sheer poverty, he leaves a debt of but five dollars behind, unpaid, it is made the chief topic of conversation for months among non-professors; and not a few of the members of the church take a peculiar delight in spreading such news abroad. Fully understanding this, Mr. Kessler, rather than contract a debt, limped along the streets day after day, often much fatigued and suffering much from

his lame knee, which was not fully recovered, and not unfrequently with tears coursing down his cheeks, to dispose of a few books, so as to enable him to continue his labors with the society and keep it together. And he felt very grateful to Almighty God that he enabled him, by practicing the most rigid economy and exerting himself to the uttermost, to leave the city at the end of the year without leaving a single penny of indebtedness behind. Nor would he have been in such straitened circumstances, financially, could he have obtained his dues from the missionary treasuries of the Pennsylvania and East Pennsylvania conferences. These claims he urged in person, and when prostrated by disease other kind brethren urged them for him, but all to no purpose. Neither the justness of his claims—admitted to be so by all—nor his helpless, afflicted condition would move those bodies in his favor. Besides this unpardonable neglect of these conferences, members of the same conference of which he was a member visited him during his protracted illness in Harrisburg—and a goodly number did so, thanks to their consideration—not one of whom ever made any inquiry into his financial circumstances. There

he was, confined to his room, his mind often harrassed with the thought that his money was all expended, but not one of these Job's comforters ever took the trouble when in his presence to say, "*are you in want?*" Truly, if this was the way to administer comfort to the afflicted it was not the way he had learned. And this utter neglect and inconsiderateness upon the part of those by whom he was visited so shook his confidence in them that it was never after fully restored. His own manner of visiting the sick had been altogether different. Having administered to their spiritual wants, he would next inquire after their temporal necessities, if he saw any reason to believe that they might be in want. At one time he visited a brother minister whose wife and child had been prostrated for some time by sickness, and, upon making inquiry, was informed that they had neither bread nor flour in the house. He went directly to a member of the church, procured a bagful of wheat, took it to the mill, had it ground, and conveyed it to the house of the minister, whose tears were the mute, yet eloquent words by which he expressed his gratitude. Mr. Kessler's conviction was that a friend *in need*



is a friend indeed, and had but little confidence in the genuineness of that man's or minister's piety who could pass his brother by without making any inquiry, when there was reason to suspect that he *might* be in want. He remembered that it was said, "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these ye did it unto me."

After he had been in Philadelphia between three and four months he succeeded in gathering up most of the members of the society, many of whom he had known for four years previous, and the congregations again became large. During the winter a very interesting revival season was enjoyed by the society, and many were converted and added to the church. The cholera also visited the city again this year, but did not prevail so severely and fatally as during its presence there to which reference is made in a previous chapter. During this time he was called upon to visit a lady taken with this terrible disease, but found her in an unconscious state, and he returned without being able to command her notice. She soon after expired.

While Mr. Kessler traveled through the city selling books he found scores and hundreds of

destitute children who attended no Sabbath-school. Some of them, whose homes were sufficiently convenient, he directed to the United Brethren Sunday-school; but perceiving that many could not be reached in this way, he conceived the idea of establishing mission Sunday-schools in destitute portions of the city. He visited the head-quarters of the American Sunday-school Union, and called the attention of its managers to this important matter; and although they did not immediately act upon the suggestion they have since done so, and many children are now gathered into Sabbath-schools who were previously entirely neglected.

The conference year now approached its close, and Mr. Kessler prepared to leave the city. He first attended the annual session of the East Pennsylvania Conference, which convened in Reading. From there he went to Chambersburg, where the annual session, for that year, of the Pennsylvania Conference was held. At this session Mr. Kessler was constituted an agent to canvass the two conference districts, to collect money for the church in Philadelphia.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE AGENCY AND ITS HORRORS—CAMP-MEETINGS—COMMENDABLE CONDUCT OF LAWYERS—SHOUTING OUT OF SEASON—SENT TO LANCASTER CITY—THE HISTORY OF THE OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH IN THAT PLACE—OBSTACLES IN THE WAY.

Never did Mr. Kessler accept a position with greater diffidence than that of agent for the church in Philadelphia—not that he doubted the worthiness of the cause for which he was to canvass, nor the necessity of an energetic effort in that direction. That something should be done, and done immediately, toward permanently establishing the church in that city was a deep conviction with him. The efforts already made by the church in that place had clearly demonstrated that it had an important work to do there, and that it would have no difficulty in accomplishing that work if it would but rise to a proper comprehension of its magnitude, and then act accordingly. But the time was now at hand when it must move forward with vigor. To continue longer on the skirmish-line

was to forfeit an important position, which would sooner or later result in a complete defeat. The church edifice must be enlarged and renovated, so as to compare favorably with the more common church buildings in the city. To do this required a considerable sum of money, to collect which he was constituted an agent. But although deeply conscious of the importance and worthiness of the work before him, yet his knowledge of the people to whom he was to present his cause, and of whom he was to solicit funds, made him feel that his prospects of success were gloomy in the extreme. Alas! his forebodings were wonderfully fulfilled.

After several fruitless attempts to secure a house to live in he took his family to a boarding house in Harrisburg, where they remained until the first of April, when he succeeded in securing a dwelling. Having purchased a horse and buggy, he set out on his unwelcome mission, as he soon found it to be. He had often feared that many who made very loud professions of love to God and his cause, and who always had the most lengthy experience to relate in the class-room, and could pray longer and shout louder than others, loved their



money more than they loved God; and now his visits to them and their conduct toward him greatly confirmed that conviction. With many of these he had been on very intimate terms. They rolled in wealth and dwelt in splendid mansions. While preaching for and among them they seemed to think very highly of him, and professed to be his warmest friends. But now they understood the nature of his business; and instead of giving him a cordial reception they scarcely treated him with common civility, and by their looks and conduct gave him to understand, most distinctly, that his presence was any thing but agreeable. When he mentioned his business to them they would at once set up a whining and fault-finding, and wind up their remarks with an emphatic declaration that they would not give a cent to the church in Philadelphia, because some of the members of the church in that city belonged to secret societies. This they defiantly, and with an evident degree of satisfaction,—pleased that they had an excuse for not giving—alleged as their reason for not giving. The truth is they had no heart to give, and gladly availed themselves of any thing as an excuse by which to cover their penuriousness.

But in spite of all discouragements Mr. Kessler toiled on, occasionally meeting with a benevolent, whole-souled brother or sister, by whose kindness and liberality his heart was made glad. O, how his soul swelled with gratitude to God when encouraged by the kindness of these good brethren and sisters. Some of these had the ability, and, what is of far more importance, the *willingness* to give, and gave liberally. Others of them had the willingness to give largely, but not the ability; yet from such he always received something; for as a rule the poor are much more liberal than the rich. By toiling and traveling hard the greater portion of the year, he succeeded in collecting between nine and ten hundred dollars, instead of three thousand, as he was expected to do. Toward the close of the year, the pastor of the charge in Harrisburg having resigned, the brethren there requested him to preach for them as often as he could, without interfering too much with his duties as agent. This he consented to do, as he resided in that place.

With the close of the conference year his agency term expired; and he firmly resolved as that was his first year in a work of that

kind it should also be his last. His experience as agent had given him an insight into the falsity of the human heart, such as he had never before attained unto. He had learned that persons can manifest the warmest kind of friendship toward you, but as soon as you ask them for money to sustain the institutions of the church they give you the cold shoulder, and avoid you as they would an evil spirit. When you pay them a pastoral visit they can take your hand, give it a hearty shake, smile very pleasantly, talk feelingly upon the subject of religion, boast of the love of God being richly shed abroad in their souls, and of their willingness to give up all for Christ's sake; but pay them a *money* visit, speak to them of the importance of manifesting their love to God by liberally sustaining his cause, and their reply is, "the gospel and its institutions should sustain themselves, without the members being asked to contribute money, for by such contributions there is danger of making ministers proud and worldly-minded." It is to be feared that if Christ was in the world bodily, and was to say to such individuals, as he said to the young ruler, "sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come, take up

"thy cross and follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," they would, as he did, go away sorrowful. "How hardly shall they that have riches—set their hearts upon their riches, and cling to them with a miserly tenacity—enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The congregation at Harrisburg gave Mr. Kessler forty dollars for the time he served them in this year; but this amount the conference deducted from the salary allowed him as agent, a few members of that body asserting that by serving that congregation he neglected the agency. This assertion was without foundation in fact—since he only preached in Harrisburg on Sabbath, and gave all the week to the agency—and was made, as Mr. Kessler firmly believed, to conceal the reprehensible conduct (toward the agent) of those who made the assertion. Early in the year he had proposed to visit and canvass their fields of labor, but they advised him to wait until a later period. This he did; but when he again proposed to canvass their charges they objected, fearing, no doubt, that it would unfavorably affect their own salaries. Thus, *by them*, he was prevented from doing as much as he might have done had he received the encouragement



and assistance it was their duty to render him. Here it should be remarked that the above charge of unfaithfulness in the discharge of his duties as agent is the only charge or word of complaint uttered against him in conference during all his labors in the ministry, and as to the justice or injustice of this the reader is left to decide, after having considered the facts as here candidly presented.

During the short time that he served the congregation in Harrisburg, near the close of this year, a very interesting revival season was enjoyed by the society. The congregation became quite large, a number were converted, and when conference assembled it was earnestly requested, by the brethren in Harrisburg, that Mr. Kessler be assigned to that charge for the following year. The conference, however, did not comply with the request.

Canvassing as an agent gave him an opportunity, in fact made it necessary for him to attend nearly all the camp-meetings held within the bounds of the conference that year, as he could at such places see a great number of the brethren, and present his claim to them in a very short time. One of these meetings was held in Perry County, near Bloomfield. There

Mr. Kessler was much gratified at observing the good order maintained, principally through the influence and very exemplary conduct of the gentlemen of the legal profession, from Bloomfield. These gentlemen attended the meeting regularly; and by setting their faces firmly against every thing that was calculated to interrupt the meeting, seeing to it that whenever an attempt was made to disturb it the officer whose duty it was to prevent such disturbance was promptly on hand, and by manifesting a sincere respect for the worship of God, an influence was brought to bear in favor of good order and religion quite too powerful for the roughs to overcome. How commendable and praiseworthy is such conduct upon the part of those whose business it is to explain, execute, and *make* the laws of the land! True, law-makers should never be law-breakers, yet it is sometimes the case that especially young "limbs of the law" do not evince, in their conduct on such occasions, as much respect for the exercises of a religious assembly as the law requires of them.

This meeting was one of special interest, in a spiritual sense. Harmony, love, zeal, and spirituality prevailed from the beginning to

the close of the meeting, and quite a large number of souls were converted before its close. From this meeting Mr. Kessler went to another, that was held near York. Here considerable interest was manifested, but there was no special revival. This he attributed largely to the conduct of a few excitable members. One evening Rev. William B. Raber preached a very impressive sermon on the judgment, producing a deep sensation throughout the entire congregation. Mr. Kessler, according to previous arrangement, followed with an exhortation. As he proceeded the congregation became still more deeply moved. Tears streamed from many eyes, and sobs and sighs were heard all through the congregation. Doubtless many would have come to the altar, but, just as the invitation was about to be given, those excitable members above referred to commenced to scream, jump, and shout. This drove the penitent emotions from the hearts of those deeply impressed, and awakened therein instead a wild feeling of curiosity and amazement. The result was no seekers came to the altar, and from that night the meeting was dull and insipid. At this Mr. Kessler's heart was grieved. He did not

object to shouting. On the other hand he enjoyed a good shout, when it came from the depths of the soul of one who lived a consistent Christian life; but he despised the shout of the excitable hypocrite (the genuine shout can always be distinguished from the spurious), and considered that all were in duty bound to restrain their feelings rather than destroy seriousness or awaken curiosity, just at a time when an effort is being made to constrain sinners to come to the altar. Nor was there any thing in his exhortation or in his manner calculated to excite shouting, but much that tended to produce solemnity and weeping. His manner of addressing sinners was always well calculated to melt them to tears, and that was the point at which he invariably aimed; and he always greatly desired to have the professors of religion present on such occasions enter into the feelings of penitents, *weep* with those who wept on account of their sins *unpardoned*, and *rejoice* with those who rejoiced on account of sins *pardoned*. When he could succeed in awakening such feelings in the hearts of both professors and non-professors, he seldom failed in having a great revival. Alas! it is too frequently the



case that the members of the church on revival occasions labor exclusively for their own personal enjoyment, to the utter neglect of the unconverted, forgetting that a timely word, feelingly spoken to the unconverted, might do more to arouse the sinner than several able sermons. If, during revival occasions, the laity of the church would make it a point to labor and pray for the conversion of sinners more than they usually do, doubtless revival efforts would be more successful, and many might be saved that go down to perdition.

Mr. Kessler next attended a camp-meeting that was held on York Circuit, in York County. At this meeting a large number were converted, and a precious season of grace was enjoyed by both ministers and members. O, how refreshing these precious seasons are to the soul of the weary, care-worn itinerant!—sweet foretastes of the joys of the heaven for which he is struggling. Their influence upon the soul is like meat to the hungry and water to the thirsty.

His labors and trials as agent, were continued until the latter part of January 1856, when he attended the annual sitting of the

East Pennsylvania Conference, and was by that body assigned to Lancaster City Mission. Soon after conference adjourned Mr. Kessler proceeded to his new field, to enter upon his labors. He found there a small church edifice, owned by the United Brethren in Christ, in which the brethren had first worshiped some twenty-five years previous. From that time forward the United Brethren ministers preached there regularly for five or six years. Then a difficulty arose in the congregation, the society having been founded on an independent scale, and they abandoned the appointment. Soon after this Rev. John Winebrenner commenced to preach there, and he and his successors continued to occupy that pulpit for several years, until the congregation became too large for the house, when they erected another, upon a different site, and abandoned the old one. Some time after this a difficulty in the congregation then worshipping in the new Bethel caused a split in it, and a part of the members seceded and came back to the old church and held their meetings there. For several years they operated as an independent congregation; but disliking this, they began to look around for a branch of the

Christian church with which they could unite, and after due deliberation decided to apply for membership to the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. Accordingly, they made application to the annual conference for membership in the church, and for a preacher, and Mr. Kessler was assigned to them. This was in 1854. But as he did not take charge of the work, for reasons previously mentioned, they succeeded in securing the services of Rev. W. S. H. Keys, for a part of the year. In 1855 Rev. J. Q. Adams was assigned to the charge, and he succeeded in getting the seven brethren who then owned the old church building—they having purchased it—to make an assignment of it to the trustees, and their successors of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. The year following, 1856, Mr. Kessler was, as already stated, assigned to this charge. From the above it will clearly appear that the charge alleged by a minister of the Bethel charge, to the effect that the United Brethren ministers had come to Lancaster city, to proselyte and steal away the members of that denomination, is wholly without foundation in fact.

On taking charge of the work Mr. Kessler found there existed considerable opposition and prejudice against the brethren, and *that*, together with his being unable to secure a house immediately, into which to move his family, greatly cramped and embarrassed him in his efforts to push forward the good work in the place. In the fall he held a protracted meeting, assembling his congregation during the day in father Miller's orchard, just beyond the city limits, and in the evening in the church. Several were converted at this meeting, and, in all, twelve added to the church during the year. During most of this year Mr. Kessler was greatly embarrassed financially, receiving but little for his services; and this so weighed him down with care that he had but little heart to engage energetically and hopefully in his labors. The congregation that would have its minister labor energetically and successfully must see to it that he is liberally supported.

The conference year now approached its close, and he prepared to attend the next session of the East Pennsylvania Conference, the ecclesiastical body to which he was now amenable. This year had been one of care, toil, and financial embarrassment to him and his;



yet he had witnessed and experienced some things to encourage him nevertheless. His labors were not wholly without success; and he fancied that he saw a prospect of the United Brethren Church being permanently established in that city, and made truly a power for good in that place. He had succeeded in drawing to their place of worship a large and respectable congregation, and in awakening some spiritual interest.

The only great barrier that he saw in the way of rapidly and permanently establishing the church in that and other cities was the clause of Discipline relative to secret societies. On account of this, many of the most influential persons who were converted at his meetings united with other branches of the Christian church. Greatly was his heart pained to see them go, after having been instrumental in leading them to the Savior; but as he could not prevail on them to sever their connection with secret orders he was compelled to see them go to strengthen and fill up the ranks of other branches of the Christian church, when their strength was so much needed in the humble branch with which he stood connected.

## CHAPTER XIV.

STILL IN LANCASTER CITY—EMBARRASSED WITH CHURCH DEBT—  
KINDNESS OF THE PEOPLE—CONVERSION AND DEATH OF A  
VERY AMIABLE YOUNG LADY—HIGHSPIRE CIRCUIT—HUMMELS-  
TOWN CIRCUIT—SEVERE ILLNESS—CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

The annual session of the East Pennsylvania Conference, for the year 1857, convened in Annville, Lebanon County. Nothing, other than the transaction of the usual business, transpired at this session. Mr. Kessler was returned to the Lancaster City Mission station for another year. He commenced the year's labors under quite discouraging circumstances. There was a debt of about thirteen hundred dollars resting upon the church building, and the obligations were held by an intensely worldly-minded sinner, who, regardless of the calamity he would inflict upon the society, was resolved to have his money immediately. He was wealthy, and could easily have favored the church with the use of it for several years longer, had he been disposed to do so; but he had no inclination in that direction, and the

whole burden of satisfying his claim was saddled upon Mr. Kessler. What to do he hardly knew. To attempt to collect the amount in time to ward off a process at law, and sale of the property, would have been folly in the extreme. To permit the church to be sold was to virtually abandon the city, so far as the United Brethren Church was concerned, for it would leave them without a place for public worship. Besides this, many of the members were so warmly attached to the little white church on Chestnut Street that to have lost it would have been to them the saddest of calamities. Just when he was almost despairing of saving the building he received a sum of money that had been due him for a number of years. Although he could with difficulty spare it, he determined to apply the whole amount to the saving of the church. To this he borrowed enough to liquidate the debt. This done, he felt greatly relieved and took courage.

During the year he collected, on his charge, a small amount toward paying back the borrowed money; but his efforts in that direction were not very successful, for it was the year of the great financial crash, and money matters were exceedingly close. There was no parson-

age connected with the charge, and rents were very high. And, to add to his financial difficulties, his salary was but small and slow in coming; so, besides attending to his pastoral duties, he opened a small school and continued it several months, hoping, by the income it would afford, to make ends meet. Toward the close of the summer season he attended several camp-meetings, where he enjoyed himself very much. His soul was often refreshed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his heart rejoiced at witnessing the conversion of sinners.

His time in Lancaster city was spent quite pleasantly, despite all his financial embarrassments. The people, both in and out of the church, were very kind and sociable, and conferred many favors upon him and his. One of these is especially deemed worthy of particular notice. Before Mr. Kessler opened his school he sold his watch, intending to purchase another when he found it convenient to do so. When he commenced to teach he was greatly in need of a time-piece, and not wishing, at that time, to purchase one, he ventured to ask a gentleman, not a member of the church, whom he knew to have two watches, to lend



him one for a few weeks. No sooner had he asked the favor than the gentleman placed the watch in his hand, saying at the same time, "*accept this as a present from me.*" Many other gifts and tokens of friendship were received during his stay in that place.

A lady residing in the next house to his was very kind, and manifested much interest in the welfare of himself and his family, when he first took up his residence there. She did all in her power to make their home and stay, in a strange city, pleasant and comfortable. She was possessed of a very kind, amiable disposition, but did not enjoy religion; nor was she a member of any branch of the Christian church. She had a pious mother, who often plead with her to give her heart to God, and offered up many a fervent prayer in her behalf; but she, like many others, thought that, as she was comparatively young in years, it would be time enough for her to give religion her attention by and by. While promising herself long life and much worldly pleasure, and following out the promptings of her generous nature, in doing good to others, she was taken suddenly and seriously ill. Her disease soon assumed such a malignant form that her life

was despaired of, and even her physician ceased to hope for her recovery. When informed of her very precarious condition, she became much alarmed, and greatly deplored having procrastinated her return to God. She said she was now too weak to pray, and feared that God would not accept her, because she had so wickedly neglected him while in health. Mr. Kessler was sent for, and as soon as he entered her room she very piteously exclaimed, "O, Mr. Kessler, please pray for me, for I have to die and am not prepared!" Death seemed to her just then to be, *truly*, the King of Terrors. Mr. Kessler did what he could to enable her to cast herself unreservedly into the hands of a merciful Savior, assuring her that he is able and *willing* to save to the uttermost, all that come to him. He then offered up a fervent prayer in her behalf, and retired. The next day he was requested, by her husband, to visit her again. He did so, and found her countenance still wearing the same sad, hopeless expression, while she was very much depressed in spirit. Physically, she was worse than when he had last seen her; spiritually, she was no better than she was then. She appeared to have relinquished her hold on every thing of a

worldly character; but still she had no hope in Christ, and was destitute of the comforts of religion. He prayed and conversed with her as before, and left. The day following he called to see her again, and asked her if she was yet willing to die. She replied, "*not yet,*" and seemed deeply affected. This sent a pang through his heart. He thought it impossible for her to be lingering on the verge of eternity, anxious to be saved, but still without hope. Her hands were already cold in death. He sung a hymn and prayed with her, and then left. About an hour later her physician called to see her. He was a pious man, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and addressed her in an affectionate manner. He told her that all had been done that could be done for her recovery, but her case was beyond the reach of medical skill. "But," continued he, "there is one Physician who can save you, even now, and for your soul's sake cheerfully, hopefully, and immediately submit your case to His hands." He then prayed with her and sung a hymn, and while singing she was most powerfully blessed, and experienced all the fullness of that peace and joy that the world can neither give nor take away. She was very

happy, and assured her husband and friends that, through Christ, she was soon going to that blissful heaven,

“The saints’ secure abode,”

that is really so far away, but which a living faith brings so near. What a change she had experienced! A few moments before and all was doubt, fear, gloom, and dread; now all is joy, peace, and bright anticipation. With a serene expression on her countenance and deep peace in her soul, she quietly, yet almost impatiently, awaited the time for her spirit to depart. The hour soon came, and she was no more on earth. She left a husband and three children behind. Her burial sermon was preached by Mr. Kessler, to a large and very deeply affected congregation.

During this year he was called upon to officiate at a great many funerals. A few months after the funeral of the lady above referred to he was visiting in Philadelphia, and received a telegram informing him of the death, in Lancaster city, of a bright child of seven summers. She was a very interesting little girl, the only daughter of pious parents, who were much attached to her. To stand by her lifeless form, that once sprightly casket



which but so recently contained such a lovely jewel, and behold it cold in death, caused a pang to rend the heart. Yet that sorrow was mingled with joy, for all felt well assured that she was only taken to a brighter clime. She was so bright and lovely that it was frequently remarked that she was too beautiful and amiable for this world.

During the winter of this year Mr. Kessler held a protracted meeting. It was well attended, a deep degree of interest was awakened, and several persons were converted. On New-year's-eve he held a watch-meeting, which proved to be a precious season of grace. Much feeling was experienced and a deep solemnity prevailed. The meeting closed at the dawn of the New Year, with secret prayer.

The close of the conference year now drew near, and Mr. Kessler began to adjust his affairs preparatory to his departure. He preached his farewell sermon on Sabbath evening, to a large and deeply-affected congregation. Although he was never in the habit, as are some, of preaching what may be termed *sensational* "farewell sermons,"—nor was he favorable to such—yet, on this occasion, a consciousness of the fact that he was preaching

in that place and to that people for the last time impressed him with unusual solemnity; and, as a consequence, his sermon was delivered with such unusual seriousness and power that very favorable notices of its ability and impressiveness appeared in both the papers then published in that city.

The annual session of conference for the year 1858 was held in Millheim, Center County, Pennsylvania. Thither Mr. Kessler wended his way, and arrived in time to enjoy what was to all present a very pleasant session. Conference now assigned him to Highspire Circuit. To this new yet old field—for he had labored there years before, as the reader will remember—he repaired soon after the session closed, and received a very kind, cordial reception. Much was done by the brethren and sisters on the charge, particularly those residing in Highspire and Middletown, to render his stay among them pleasant; and a grateful remembrance of their kindness was cherished by him until his death. During the year he held some interesting meetings, and there were a few conversions on the charge. Altogether it was a year very pleasantly and profitably spent. The membership of the church was

revived, its influence was extended, and a foundation seemed to be well laid down, on which to build an extensive work the coming year.

Conference now drew near, which was to convene in Union Deposit. Without any thing like a formal and final closing up of his labors on the charge, Mr. Kessler set out to attend the annual session, expecting nothing other than that he would be returned to the same charge for at least another year. This expectation was founded upon a well-established custom of the conference, not to move a married man oftener than once in two years; and as there was no dissatisfaction on the charge, but on the other hand all were well pleased and anxious to have him return, he had not the remotest idea of being sent elsewhere. But for reasons, "wise or otherwise," the conference saw fit to send him to Hummelstown Circuit, thereby putting him to all the inconvenience of suddenly moving from where he had so recently settled and but become sufficiently acquainted to enable him to labor to advantage. At first he felt like appealing from the decision of the stationing committee but a second thought changed that feeling, and he resolved

to abide by the decision, thinking there might be a special providence in it.

He proceeded, as soon as the conference session closed, to make arrangements to enter upon his labors on his new field. He found a revival in progress at the Hummelstown appointment, which he continued some time, and at which several persons were converted. After considerable trouble a house, or a part of one, was secured in Hummelstown, into which he moved his family and goods. The circuit was quite large, and Rev. Jacob Runk was assigned to it as his colleague. The duties and labors of the charge were arduous, and devolved principally upon Mr. Kessler, on account of the failure of his colleague's health; and as his own constitution was very much broken down, it was with the greatest difficulty that he bore up under the burden that was laid upon him. But by taxing his energies and powers of endurance to the uttermost, he succeeded in meeting all his appointments on the different parts of the circuit until November. In that month he held a series of meetings in Sherk's meeting-house. While thus engaged he took a severe cold, accompanied by chills and fever, but continued the meeting for more



than a week, preaching and laboring every evening.

His effort there on the last evening that he was present was a very solemn, powerful one. In the course of his remarks he told his congregation that he felt that he was addressing them for the last time; that many of them he would never meet again in this world, and he wished to warn them of "sin, righteousness and a judgment to come," that, should any of them be so unfortunate as to make their way down to perdition, his skirts might be clear of their blood. The congregation was much moved; many eyes were suffused with tears; but, strange to say, only a few found their way to the altar as penitents. That was his last sermon in that church, and to that people. The day following he came to his home in Hummelstown and was taken with a very severe attack of pneumonia, from which he suffered greatly, and by which he was confined to his room for more than a month. At length he slowly, and contrary to the expectation of all, recovered, and was able to preach again.

Conference year was now approaching its close, and he could but adjust his business on

the circuit and make the necessary arrangements for rendering an account of his year's labors. In the way of salary he received, during the year, about two hundred dollars, but would have received more could he have attended punctually to the duties of the charge, toward the close of the year. He had labored very faithfully and very acceptably during the whole of the year, and by his very exemplary, Christ-like deportment, had greatly endeared himself to the hearts of liberal-minded, true followers of the Redeemer, both in the United Brethren and other branches of the Christian church, and made a serious impression on the minds of many who made no profession of religion. Nor was this a result peculiar to his labors on the Hummelstown circuit. Wherever he labored, during the whole of his ministerial life, results similar in character were invariably secured. In spirit, always kind and affable; in deportment always exemplary and Christ-like; in labors ever zealous, abundant, and self-sacrificing, he could not fail to secure the love and esteem of every true Christian, and command the respect and confidence of every sane man. His life and labors

were a living testimony in favor of the holy cause he so ably advocated and faithfully recommended to others.

## CONCLUSION.

RECEIVES A STROKE OF PARALYSIS—RESIGNS HIS CHARGE—  
OPENS A SHOE-STORE—IS COMMISSIONED POST-MASTER—AT-  
TACKED WITH CONGESTION OF THE LUNGS—RECOVERS—TAKES  
CONGESTIVE INTERMITTING FEVER—SUFFERS GREATLY—DIES  
A CALM, PEACEFUL DEATH.

We now approach the close of the mortal career of this unassuming but truly faithful and efficient servant of Christ. And here it will be seen that he was quite as submissive in *suffering* the will of God as he had been faithful in *doing* it.

The annual session of conference for the year 1860 convened in Springville, Lancaster County. It was a pleasant session. Often was Mr. Kessler heard to speak of the very pleasant time he had while attending conference there. His energies were much taxed,

during the session, by the discharge of various duties, as a member of different committees. Several evenings he was at work till after midnight. On Sunday he went to Mount Joy, by special appointment, and preached in the Methodist Episcopal church of that place, in the evening. On Monday morning he returned to conference, and toward noon of the same day, while on the conference floor, proposing or advocating some measure, he experienced a slight paralytic stroke. It did not disable him much, affecting his speech but little; and at first he gave it but little attention, supposing it would soon wear off.

Conference adjourned, having returned him to the Hummelstown Circuit. He set out for home, and came as far as Highspire, where he stopped to visit some friends. That afternoon there was a funeral in the United Brethren church of that place, which he attended. The services were conducted in the German language, and as there were many English persons present he was requested to deliver a short address in that language; and more especially because he was acquainted with the family of which the deceased had been a member. He did so, but experienced considerable difficulty



in speaking, his vocal organs being somewhat paralyzed. The day following he crossed over the country to Hummelstown, a distance of five miles, in a private conveyance, and reached that place in quite a helpless condition. His family physician, Dr. Thomas Fox, was immediately called in, and very kindly and attentively administered to him, but all to no purpose. His case seemed to be beyond the reach of medical skill. All the physicians of the place were consulted, and each pronounced him incurable. He was now confined to his room for about two months. During this time the people of the place were very kind to him and his, and did much toward rendering his affliction lighter. He finally so far recovered as to be able to walk around through the village; but as he was not able to travel he resigned the circuit, and determined to open a small shoe-store, hoping thereby to break the monotony of a retired life, and add a little to his means of subsistence. Thus engaged, he spent his time very pleasantly—was cheerful and contented. Sometime during the summer of 1861 his friends advised him to apply for the post-office of Hummelstown. He did so, and received the appointment, which position he held until his death.

Although he was now able to walk around and attend to business, yet he was by no means fully recovered from the effects of the paralytic stroke. From the time he first received it his speech was more or less impaired, and he only preached four sermons after that sad occurrence. Sometimes he had scarcely strength enough in his vocal organs to offer an audible prayer. In June, 1862, he was suddenly taken with a very severe attack of congestion of the lungs. He became pale, helpless, and cold as a corpse. The physician was called in and ordered stimulants and warm applications, and he slowly recovered. When fully restored to consciousness he exclaimed, "*why did you not let me lie a few moments longer? I should soon have been in a better world.*" In process of time his health was so far restored as to enable him to attend to his business again, which he continued to do until April, 1863. He then took congestive intermitting fever, from which he never recovered. He lingered about six weeks after being taken with this disease, during which time he suffered as but few do. He lay upon his bed but three or four nights of all that time, as the difficulty he experienced in breathing was so great that he was compelled

to rest, as best he could, in an erect or half-reclining posture. Yet through all his three years' affliction, nor even now, was he ever heard to murmur or complain. He bore all with the most complete patience and Christian resignation; and every act of kindness and expression of sympathy—and they were numerous—by the many who called to see him, were highly appreciated and recognized by him, as so many marks of his heavenly Father's love and care.

During his illness he was visited by many of his ministerial brethren; and to some of those who called the more frequently he became so much attached that he could scarcely have them out of his sight. At one time he overheard a friend remark to another that it seemed hard indeed for him to have to suffer so much. He immediately reproved him for speaking thus, and remarked, "*I did the will of the Lord as long as I was able, now I am willing to suffer his will as long as he sees fit.*" At another time he was asked if he had any feelings of guilt, fear, or condemnation. He calmly, yet positively answered, "*none whatever; my work is done, my course is finished, and I patiently wait the Lord's good pleasure.*" On

several occasions he requested the friends to sing and pray with him, saying that he should be pleased, were it the Lord's will, to depart from earth while his friends were singing a song of praise and triumph.

About three months before his death Rev. Henry W. Landis, a former colleague of his, paid him a visit. Mr. Landis was then apparently enjoying the best of health. When he bade Mr. Kessler farewell he wept freely, and remarked that when they should meet again it would be in a better world. With these words they parted. About two months after this visit Mr. Landis was taken suddenly ill, and in a few days after died in the triumphs of a living faith. Little did he or Mr. Kessler think, the last time they saw each other on earth, that they should so soon meet in the spirit world; much less that he would be the first to quit the shores of time.

Mr. Kessler still lingered, his physical energies rapidly wasting away; and he became more and more helpless until the twelfth day of June. He had then become so weak as scarcely to recognize any one; and calmly, peacefully, without a struggle or a groan, he



breathed his last, having attained the forty-first year of his age and the twenty-ninth of his ministerial labors.

Thus lived and thus died this faithful servant of God, of man, and the church. In the accumulation of worldly riches he had accomplished but little; yet who will say that his life was a failure? Who but would like to die the same calm, peaceful, triumphant death? How sweet to yield up, to that God who gave it, a life whose energies have been completely exhausted in the promotion of His glory, and in laboring with a zeal that amounts to an inspiration, for the salvation of fallen humanity. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like unto his!"

"I looked upon the righteous man,  
And saw his parting breath;  
Without a struggle or a sigh,  
Serenely yield to death.  
There was no anguish on his brow,  
Nor terror in his eye;  
The spoiler aimed a fatal dart,  
But lost the victory.

"I looked upon the righteous man,  
And heard the holy prayer  
Which rose above that breathless form,  
To sooth the mourners' care;

And felt how precious was the gift,  
 He to his loved ones gave—  
 The stainless memory of the just,  
 The wealth beyond the grave.

“I looked upon the righteous man,  
 And all our earthly trust—  
 Of pleasure, vanity, or pride—  
 Seemed lighter than the dust,  
 Compared with his celestial gain—  
 A home above the sky.  
 O, grant us, Lord, his life to live,  
 That we like him may die.”

Mr. Kessler's funeral was attended by a large concourse of friends and acquaintances, and a very able and impressive discourse was delivered on the occasion, by Rev. D. Eberly, of the Pennsylvania Conference, now President of Cottage Hill College, from Rev. xiv: 13.—  
*“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”*

His body was conveyed to and deposited in Mount Kalmia Cemetery, at Harrisburg, where it rests in hope of the resurrection of the just. How appropriately the lines of Montgomery apply to him:

“‘Servant of God, well done;  
 Rest from thy loved employ:  
 The battle fought, the victory won,  
 Enter thy Master's joy.’”

"The voice at mid-night came,  
He started up to hear;  
A mortal arrow pierced his frame,  
He fell but felt no fear.

"Tranquil amid alarms,  
It found him on the field;  
A veteran slumbering on his arms,  
Beneath his red-cross shield.

"The pains of death are passed,  
Labor and sorrow cease;  
And life's long warfare closed at last,  
His soul is found in peace.

"Soldier of Christ, well done,  
Praise be thy new employ;  
And while eternal ages run,  
Rest in thy Savior's joy."

Mr. Kessler was a man above the medium stature; of rather handsome, dignified personal appearance; remarkably neat and tidy, though plain in his dress; kind and sociable in his manners, and possessed of a tender-hearted, sympathetic nature. May the Lord raise up others in the church who may be possessed of his virtues, emulate his example, and, fired with the same heavenly zeal, carry forward the good work in which he lived, labored, and died.

# SERMON.

## THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

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*He that overcometh shall inherit all things.*  
*Rev. 21 : 7.*

In this world it is impossible for man to be inactive. The peculiar construction of his physical, mental, and moral natures, and the relation they sustain to the universe of God, make indifference and inaction with him an impossibility. Slothfully inclined as he may be, the compulsions, threatenings, and incentives which meet him at every turn in life, as naturally and irresistibly impel him to action as the influence of gravitation drives a lump of lead downward through a vacuum. Action is a law of his being, and conflict his constant companion on earth.

In his early infancy he enters the gateway of life's battle-field, an active and deeply interested participant, where there are battles



to be lost or won, victories to be gained or defeats to be sustained, greater in their results than Waterloo or Gettysburg.

Holy Writ unites with man's nature and the surrounding creation in declaring that he is deeply interested in a great moral conflict—that he is doing battle in that conflict, and in it must either “*overcome*” or “*be overcome*.” His fate in this conflict is determined by the choice of sides he makes. God, the great exponent of all good, the champion of the side that must finally win, urges him by every possible motive that can be used consistently with man's free moral agency, to take side with the right and renounce the wrong.

He appeals to his honor, his fears, his desires, his sympathies, his ambition—ever making prominent the fact that he who would be crowned must *strive*, and strive *lawfully*. Effort, conflict, victory, and reward, are the expression of a successful experience, all of which are implied in the text. This world is not a pleasure-ground, whose games are to be played. Stern, solemn realities force themselves upon us, and demand our attention. He who expects to climb the steeps of eminence, of usefulness, of goodness, without falls and suffering, even

if he do not meet with a total overthrow, will be sadly disappointed. Mortal enemies oppose us at every turn in life. The world, the flesh and the devil, must be met, must be battled with, must be discomfited, and no man is finally crowned who has not often fought and often conquered. That man should be an actor in such a conflict seems necessary. Germs of virtue are implanted in his very nature. That he may become the fit occupant of a holy, happy mansion, these germs must be developed. The corrupt part of him must be excluded and the virtuous so enlarged as to fill the whole man—the desires, the aspirations, every propensity. To effect this desirable purpose, no place is so well adapted as a world of trial. Man's loyalty to God, his desire to cling to the right, is best tested by presenting inducements to do wrong. Were there no trials to meet, no inducements to a life of crime and opposition to a life of virtue, how would it be possible for man to give satisfactory evidence of his preference for good or his loyalty to God? Hence the conflict, and the oftener he overcomes the oftener he can overcome, and the easier he can overcome. Triumphant to-day gives us an easier victory to-morrow. Liv-

ing rightly to-day makes it easier for us to live rightly to-morrow. Defeat to-day makes us afraid to meet the foe to-morrow.

That there is a conflict going on in the world between truth and error, in which man has become an earnest and deeply interested participant, is a fact too obvious and too generally admitted, to demand either proof or illustration. It was originally designed that man's powers be wielded on the side of truth, and for this he was admirably constituted. Yet the All-wise Creator saw fit to grant him privilege, and give him the power of choosing the colors under which he would do battle—the side he would defend. Man is a being of habit. There is in him a tendency to do again what he has done; and having been first placed by his Creator on the side of truth, he doubtless would have continued there, had not the champion of error succeeded in alluring him from the right. Or, as Milton would have it, the woman was deceived and became a transgressor, and man chose, voluntarily, to share with her all the horrors of death, temporal and eternal, rather than be separated from her. Thus man become, by creation, an actor in this conflict, and, by transgression, polluted with guilt. And

now, that he may escape the just punishment due to rebellion, he must retrace his steps, return to his allegiance, and by dint of personal effort, backed by the sustaining energies of God's grace, "*overcome*" every thing that opposes his return. This must be accomplished while in this world. This world is the great battleground, and the campaign ends only with life. This struggle, however, is not to be regarded in the same light as those in which nations with sword, musket, cannon, and shell contend for the mastery. National conflicts not unfrequently grow out of this moral one, and in them the right experiences a triumph or defeat just as the army contending for the principles of justice is victorious or otherwise. But national conflicts, while they are not unfrequently auxiliary to the triumph of truth, are generally of a carnal nature, while the struggle of life is a moral one. Ignorance and error on the one side, and goodness and truth on the other, meet in the empire of the affections, contend for the mastery, and a conflict is often waged with as much determination as was the battle of Salamis, and the ground disputed with as much desperation as was the pass at Thermopylæ.



The foundation of this struggle lies back of all created things, in the absolute RIGHT, which, as the highest good, has ruled from eternity, in the bosom of God. The right has ever controlled his actions, determined his purposes; yea, He is himself the very embodiment of right, and every act having Him for its author can but be righteous.

In all conceptions of intelligence there are *necessary* contrasts. Light is the necessary opposite of darkness; cold the necessary opposite of heat; vice the necessary opposite of virtue; evil the necessary opposite of good; error the necessary opposite of truth; right the necessary opposite of wrong. Man has motives urging to do right, to battle for truth, to oppose error, that seem little less than omnipotent—honor, happiness, victory, reward;—and motives drawing him to the wrong with such strange power that he is too rarely able to resist them. And in this field of opposing influences lies the battle-ground of our life-struggle.

That this is no imaginary struggle, is proved by all the history of the world, and all the writings of antiquity. The records of the ancients, as handed down to us, confirm the

fact that discordant elements have, ever since the Fall of Man, been really at war in our world—that the wrong has, in all ages, had its advocates, its popes, its Mahomets, its Joe Smiths,—that it has, since then, been vigorously striving to triumph over the right. Nor has the right been entirely without its admirers and devotees. Among the ancient heathen it had its Socrates, its Plato, its Aristides, its Cicero. Among the more highly favored of heaven, it had its Enoch, its Noah, its Elijah, its Samuel, its Daniel, and thousands of others, who stood as great moral light-houses along the craggy shores of time.

Nor is this struggle confined to particular localities. It is all through society, and in every human heart. Man's heart is an empire in which right and wrong, truth and error, vice and virtue struggle for the mastery. And that heart which manfully resists the wrong and takes its stand upon the side of right, has for its ally the King of kings, and will certainly achieve a most glorious victory; and as a reward for overcoming, "*shall inherit all things.*" This struggle is seen on a larger scale in the conflicts of nations; and the mortal combat on the field finds its dignity in

the spiritual conflict which lies beneath it. This moral conflict supersedes every military campaign—every field engagement. Long before the armies are marshaled and the cannon planted, the idea as to the justice or injustice, the right or the wrong of the point in dispute, comes up before the bar of the leaders' consciences, receives a hearing there, and is justified, either because it is just, or upon false pretenses. And this point decided, the edict goes forth that the cause is just. War is declared, arguments, logical or illogical, are framed to convince the less credulous; and this done, the psalm is next sung, "the hatchet is dug up," banners are unfurled, armies marshaled, and from thousands of voices is heard the watchword, "*Victory or Death.*" All the world's great battles have been fought upon the principles or pretenses of justice; and in no other way could the force of arms be sustained. There is an inspiration that clusters around the idea that "*my cause is just,*" which nerves the mortal arm with Herculean strength; and there is a prostrating influence accompanying the idea that "*my cause is unjust,*" that unstrings the heroic nerve and converts the conqueror into a fugitive poltroon. There

is something divine in the very idea of doing battle for the right. It is admitted by all Christian nations that the right is God's side; and heathen nations never march forth to mortal combat, so confident of success as when they feel well assured that the gods are looking compassionately upon them, on account of the injustice they have suffered, and the wrongs they are about to avenge. Produce in the minds of a heathen army—I care not how powerful—the conviction that their cause is unjust, that the gods are against them, that Mars marches at the head of the enemy's columns, and they are already discomfited. A Xerxes, with his millions of warriors, will flee for his life, rather than meet the small Grecian force in open battle. “The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.” He who goes forth a soldier on the side of right, though there be a thousand against him for every one that is for him, must certainly triumph. He can but conquer, living or dying. If he fall in the struggle, he falls covered with victory; and Jesus Christ, his great captain, will gather up his mangled dust, and having reinvigorated and immortalized it with His own resur-



recting power, will set it as a diadem in his great spiritual temple, where, soul and body re-united, the conqueror can exult through cycles of ages, over the satisfaction that must ever arise from a consciousness of having done battle for the right.

Great men have great ends in view; but God often defeats them. The ambitious despot aims at conquest and subjugation, regardless of truth or right. But even if he does succeed for a time, he or his successor must finally learn, either by the visitation of Egyptian plagues, Babylonish exile, by being driven out to eat grass with the ox, or by some other extraordinary providential interference, that there is an omnipotent God, who is jealous for the right, and who, in spite of man's agreement with hell, will cause the right to triumph. No Napoleon or Wellington can foresee events accurately. The right may go under, and the wrong may triumph for a time; but these temporary irregularities will be adjusted in the end, though not as soon as men may wish or expect. Tyranny may spread her blighting curse to the four corners of the earth. Error may hold the world in chains for a time; but a Luther will arise and exhibit the flaming

torch of truth, and a Washington will unfurl the banner of liberty. Superstition may inflate herself and make her ramparts never so strong. Falsehood may for a time succeed in deceiving the world; but the decisive hour is sure to come. Italy will have her Garibaldi and Cavour to assert the claims of freedom, and the bulwarks of popery and the rotten fabrics of priestcraft will quake and quail before the rapid advance of Victor Emanuel. Oppression may carry her conquests into the very sanctuary of liberty, and load with shackles four millions of human beings, who dwell in the land of the Free; but the day of retribution will come. Rebellion will cut the "*gordian knot*" of "*iniquity framed into a law*," and tear away the mantle of constitutional protection thrown around the hideous monster, SLAVERY! And a Lincoln, with one stroke of the pen, will annihilate the blighting curse that has held a nation in chains.

The fact and nature of this struggle are fully illustrated in the sacred Scriptures, where there is not a book, chapter or verse, which does not directly or indirectly imply this struggle or derive its significance from it. So,

also, in the writings of all nations, and in the history of the world, this struggle is observed; and above all is it noticeable in our personal experience. Not a week, not a day, yea, scarcely an hour of our lives passes, but we experience somewhat of this struggle. Satan assails us in a thousand different ways. There are "fightings without and fears within." The passions and appetites clamor for gratification. Conscience, the magnet of the soul, ever pointing to the throne of God, forbids the indulgence.

The moral dispositions are fiercely beleaguered by the evil propensities. Evil desires rise up from within, and must be subdued. Inducements to error from without, present themselves and must be battled with. And this state of things is experienced almost hourly. The great apostle to the gentiles, who was blessed with an unusual degree of the Divine presence, acknowledged that such was the case with him. He asserts that when he *would* do good, *evil* was present with him. His confession is, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin."

As to the final result of this struggle there can be no question. If God is God, the right must win.

“For right is right since God is God,  
And right the day must win;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.”

True, sin is powerful, but God is *almighty*, and with a potent arm will wield his moral forces, until the devil skulks away into hell, ashamed to even show his head again, and the last sinner on earth is converted or destroyed. All the tendencies of virtue, though now in conflict, are toward supremacy. As the electric current completes its journey over the whole length of the conductor, though that conductor pass over sandy deserts or through the chambers of the deep, encircling the world, so virtue, having gained a lodgment in the heart, in the community, in the nation, tends to disseminate itself through the whole man, the whole community, the whole nation, to the complete annihilation of all wickedness. Its course is onward, and in its advance it gains strength. Like as a stone in a sling when it is made to revolve accumulates momentum, that when let fly it goes with redoub-



led velocity, so virtue as it advances gains strength and velocity, until it will finally make its last giant effort, and with one fell swoop, rid the world of every system of vice. It may require time to reach this result. But God has an eternity of time before him; and we have no reason to believe that he will ever forsake his cause or abandon his purpose, until he has "*put all things* under his feet."

Jesus Christ came "to take away the sin of the world." He accomplished that work, so far as satisfying the demands of Divine justice and making salvation possible for man are concerned, by his sufferings and death. But the great work of the world's restoration, even then, had but fairly commenced. In the introduction of his doctrines and the organization of his church, we see only the germ of that heaven-originated scheme that is destined to revolutionize the world, to neutralize sin, to bring the world back to God, in a word, "to take away ALL the sin of the world." And let no one think that the gospel plan has accomplished that for which it is designed, or that ALL the sin of the world is taken away, until virtue has gained full ascendancy—Christ's kingdom completely triumphed over

every false doctrine, and the earth is fully restored to its paradisaical perfection. To this glorious consummation the constant, gradual development of virtue, as effected by the gospel plan, tends; and the Son of God raises this expectation in our hearts when he teaches us to pray, "*Thy will be done ON EARTH as it is done in heaven.*"

The world's history shows that after years of struggling it is the prerogative of the right to triumph. Were it not so, there could have been no moral progress. Mankind, as a whole, would be just as corrupt and disgusting now as when the Druids maintained their bloody superstitions in Britain, and the Saxons worshiped Woden and Thor. True, when we reflect upon the vast amount of wickedness still discernible in every quarter of the world, and in every department of society—among the heathen, and among the enlightened; in political, commercial and social circles; in the city and in the country; in church and in state; the fraud and violence practiced by man upon his fellows; the unholy ambitions, deceptions, jealousies, clashings, and envyings, that exist among and are practiced by those who claim to be the followers of the

meek and lowly Jesus—when we behold all this, our faith wavers, and we feel like denying the advance of the human family in the scale of moral reform. But in spite of all this there is a perceptible upward tendency. Leaving out exceptional cases, there is more liberty, more humanity, more regard for justice now than when Achilles drew Hector around the walls of Troy, and Rome executed the decree, “*Carthago est delenda.*” Advance is observable in England and France, and in all the countries of Europe, from century to century, and from year to year. This advance may not be so plainly apparent when we look at events as they occur, just as we can not observe the momentary advance of the noonday sun. We must compare his position at one hour with his position at another, and then the motion is quite perceptible. So with the moral advancement of nations. Compare the present condition of Europe with its condition in the early part of the sixteenth century, and what a contrast! Then ignorance and the demoralizing influences of corrupt, inhuman priests held the mind in chains. Then the masses acted only as they were jesuitically acted upon. Now, where once the power

of the Pope was supreme, men think and act for themselves; and ignorance and superstition are gradually disappearing before the advance of truth and liberty.

And with what gigantic strides has the right advanced in our own land, within the last few years! It seems evident that the recent appalling war was but the result of the advance of truth and right, in opposition to ignorance and wrong. Who but sees in it the mustering of all the forces of selfish and irresponsible power that they might "*confederate*" and be overthrown, so that we and succeeding generations might sing forever, and without blushing, "THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER?" It seems as if the slave power had become impatient for destruction,—so much so that it could not wait the gradual growth of public sentiment in favor of universal liberty. That was too tedious. As if moved by some strange infatuation, it plunged itself into a war which it might have seen would, as it did, cost it the very existence of the "*peculiar institution.*" And this it did when there was no call for it under the heavens, so far as its interests were concerned. Never were its rights more secure and its voice more



potent in the legislative halls of the nation, than the day before it took the fatal leap. Just when it could say, "*I sit a queen and am no widow,*" it plunged from the proud height of controlling all the energies of the great republic, into the yawning gulf of secession and bankruptcy. We can account for this in no other way than by viewing it as a result produced by an overruling Providence, which is ever jealous for the right, and which will not always permit the weak and innocent to be trampled upon. It is but the result of the tendency there is in the right, in virtue, in truth, in liberty, to triumph over every system of oppression and error.

We can not always see the immediate result of any struggle; but we may rest assured that the Omnipotent God is ever on the side of theism against idolatry—on the side of liberty against despotism—and in the end the right must achieve the victory.

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again;  
The eternal years of God are her's.  
While error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies amid her worshippers."

The normal position of the Christian is not on the side of evil, though it appear in

angelic forms, but on the side of righteousness. Philosophy, reason, and Holy Writ, demand of him loyalty to God and truth. He must occupy no neutral position; for neutrality is disloyalty, and disloyalty is rebellion. The right is the side of strength and the side of victory. He who betrays liberty betrays right, and he who betrays right betrays God. Nor must the Christian be satisfied with taking sides. *Service* is demanded of him; and he must go into the thickest of the fight, for he is "the salt of the earth," "the light of the world," the moral agency that gives motive power to the million. And he who by the grace of God keeps his own heart, and destroys the traitors in it, and then lets the light of that victory shine out through a consistent Christian life, to illumine and cheer others, accomplishes a work to which the largest armies are inadequate, and shall receive a reward the greatness of which can only be estimated by the extent of the universe itself. In the strength of Christ he must stand firm. Though the hot hail of slander pelt him, and the fiery storms of misrepresentation howl around him, still he must stand, ever exhibiting the true spirit of the meek and adorable

Jesus, and the victory can but be his. Jesus is his leader in this conflict, and if he would come off victor, he must "*stand up*" for Him. He heads the conflict and will wear the crown, and share it with his victorious soldiers. Those who rally around his standard fight under his eye, are equipped from his arsenal, provisioned from his commissary, and march at his command. He carefully notes the conflict, and will reward all who endure faithfully to the end with the complete inheritance of "*all things.*" Who could ask more?

"Lo, the battle is begun!

Lo, Immanuel's troops in motion!

Some the prize have nearly won,

Some already seize their portion.

"Hear ye not the victor's song?

Hear ye not the captive's crying?

Shout! Jehovah's arm is strong:

Shout! the alien foe is flying.

"See, the crimson banners wave!

Hear the chariot's rolling thunder!

Christ the conquered world shall save,

Cleave Apollyon's throne asunder.

"Lo, the ransom'd marching home!

Anthems loud and palms victorious;

Satan conquer'd, death o'ercome,

Crown secured and mansions glorious."

















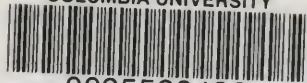




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